

King receives call from Bahrain's emir

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein on Monday received a phonecall from Bahraini Emir Sheikh Issa Bin Salman Al Khalifa on the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan. Sheikh Issa wished the King continued good health and a happy life and the Jordanian people further progress and prosperity. Their Majesties King Hussein and Queen Noor on Monday returned home after a seven-day private visit to Austria. They were received at the airport by His Royal Highness Crown Prince Hassan, Princess Sarvath, Royal family members, Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali, speakers of the Senate and the Lower House of Parliament, King's advisers, as well as senior officials. King Hussein and Queen Noor were accompanied by Prince Hamzah, Prince Hashem, Princess Haya, Princess Iman and Princess Rayah.

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Sudan constitution referendum in April — speaker

KHARTOUM (AFP) — Sudan will hold a referendum on a draft constitution in April, the parliament speaker Hassan Abdullah Al Turabi, has said. "The constitution will encompass all present and future issues in a way that it cannot be amended by governments as they wish," Mr. Turabi told recently-elected governors of the south Sudanese states in a meeting Sunday. The constitution, to include provisions allowing a state of emergency to be imposed when required, would be based on constitutional decrees issued by President Omar Al Beshir since he took power in a coup d'etat in 1989. Mr. Turabi said. A commission is still working on the draft, which is to be handed over to President Beshir, who will in turn hand it to parliament for discussion ahead of the referendum.

Immigration to Israel drops eight per cent in 1997

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Jewish immigration to Israel fell eight per cent during 1997 over the previous year mostly due to a drop in the number of Jews leaving the former Soviet Union, officials said Monday. Some 66,000 Jews, mostly from Ukraine and Russia, immigrated to Israel this year, down from 70,800 who settled in the country last year, immigration ministry officials said. Only 60,000 immigrants had been forecast and the excess has left the ministry in debt, they added. Immigration to Israel has been steadily dropping off since it reached a peak in the early 1990s. More than 700,000 Jews have immigrated to Israel from the former Soviet Union since 1989. Most Jews from the former Soviet Union have already immigrated to Israel but others have chosen to remain behind for economic reasons as unemployment in Israel has risen to some eight per cent.

Far-right Russian leader meets Qadhafi in Tripoli

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, leader of Russia's extreme-right Liberal Democratic party, met Libyan leader Muammar Qadhafi in Tripoli Sunday. Libyan television reported, Mr. Zhirinovskiy praised Col. Qadhafi who greeted him in a tent in the Libyan desert, according to television pictures. Libyan television said the two had discussed "ways of developing relations between Libya and Russia" adding that the Russian ultra-nationalist had expressed his party's "solidarity with and support for Libya against all the challenges it meets." The station did not say when the Russian politician, recently in Baghdad, had arrived in Libya, nor how he had arrived. Libya is under a U.N. flight embargo imposed over the bombing of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie Scotland in 1988.

Saudi decapitated for murder

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi was beheaded by sword Monday in Taif, western Saudi Arabia, for murder, bringing to 123 the number of executions announced in the kingdom since the beginning of the year. "Rajan Ben Samir Al Oteibi was executed for killing fellow Saudi Salim Ben Salim Al Oteibi after an argument," the interior ministry said in a statement.

Jordan, Iraq conclude '98 oil deal at reduced price Parties agree to lay pipeline — report

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan and Iraq have concluded a deal on the sale of 4.8 million tonnes of Iraqi oil and oil products to Jordan for 1998 at a reduced price.

According to an agreement signed in Baghdad Sunday evening by Minister of Energy and Mineral Resources Mohammad Saleh Horani and his Iraqi counterpart Amer Mohammad Rashid, Jordan will buy its crude oil in 1998 at \$16.8 per barrel, down from \$19.15 in 1997.

Under the new agreement, Iraq will also give Jordan \$300 million in oil supplies next year in payment of an old debt, as it did in 1997.

More than 3,000 oil tanker trucks transport the crude oil and oil products from Iraq to Jordan at the rate of 400 trucks per day, according to Mr. Horani, who noted that it costs \$50 million annually to transport the oil.

The two sides, however, have now agreed to lay an oil pipeline, according to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, which gave no other details about this project. Agreement was also reached on the establishment of a joint oil services company, expanding cooperation in oil prospecting operations in Jordan, and the establishment of a refinery in Aqaba.

Jordan currently has one refinery, located in Zarqa.

The U.N. has allowed Jordan to continue receiving oil supplies from Iraq because Amman has no other source of supply at concessionary terms.

The deal was struck just before the termination of the current accord, which expires in January, and followed repeated assurances by Iraqi leaders that Baghdad would not cut off or reduce the amount of oil it has been supplying to the Kingdom following the recent protest against Iraq's execution of four Jordanians accused of smuggling spare auto parts.

In return, Jordan has been supplying Iraq with U.N.-authorised goods and services worth \$225 million under the 1997 trade protocol between the two countries. Jordan is hoping to increase the volume of its annual exports in the coming year.



Minister of Energy Mohammad Saleh Al Horani shaking hands with Iraq's oil minister, General Amir Mohammad Rasheed, Monday after signing an agreement to supply Jordan with 4.8 million tonnes of oil in 1998 at half the world price (AP photo)

Israel's police chief says Jewish extremists plotting new attacks

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israel's national police chief warned Monday that Jewish extremists were plotting new attacks on Jerusalem's Al Aqsa Mosque compound in a bid to torpedo a planned troop withdrawal from the West Bank.

"Far right groups are still planning ways to seize the Temple Mount," Commissioner Asaf Hefetz told Israel Radio, using the Israeli name for the raised platform holding Al Aqsa Mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

Last week police arrested two right-wing Jewish militants who allegedly planned to throw a pig's head into the mosque compound during the Muslim Holy Month of Ramadan, which begins Wednesday.

Hefetz said the radicals' aim was to spark bloody Muslim rioting which would prevent the government from carrying out a promised transfer of West Bank territory to Palestinian rule.

He said there were hundreds of far right activists ready to engage in such violent provocation and called on the government and Jewish religious leaders to speak out publicly against such extremists.

Al Aqsa compound allegedly lies on the site of the second Jewish Temple, which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

Jewish extremists want to seize the complex and rebuild the temple in the place of the mosques.

The right-wing government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has agreed in principle to carry out a new troop withdrawal from parts of the West Bank as required under interim peace accords.

But the coalition, which includes hardline nationalists, has yet to agree on the scope or timing of the pullback. Mr. Netanyahu is expected to announce details of the withdrawal when he meets next month in Washington with U.S. President Bill Clinton.

Red Cross renovates only working sewage treatment plant in Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — The International Committee of the Red Cross announced here Monday that it has renovated Iraq's only functioning sewage-treatment plant, in Diwaniya south of Baghdad.

The plant can handle 12 million litres a day, or the wastewater from 100,000 people, the Red Cross said in a news release.

The sewage-treatment facility, the only one operational in Iraq, is 185 kilometres south of Baghdad.

"Its functioning will have a positive impact not only for the population downstream who are pumping their drinking water from the river."

"It will also contribute to the protection of the surrounding environment," the release said.

To upgrade the plant over the past seven months, the Red Cross replaced obsolete pumps, repaired installation parts and changed some sections of the electrical control system and protection equipment.

The equipment was imported by the Red Cross. Since 1991, the Red Cross has been working with Iraqi water authorities to improve sewage water evacuation and drinking water production, the release said.

A Red Cross official said the organisation put five million dollars toward such activities in 1997.

Iraq has been under a U.N. embargo since it invaded Kuwait in 1990.



Holy Month of Ramadan begins as of today

The Holy Month of Ramadan begins today. The Islamic Chief Justice Sheikh Izzeddine Al Khatib Al Tamimi who made the announcement on television Monday said that the new Moon has been spotted marking the start of the month of Ramadan. Jordanians flock to the markets in downtown Amman, Monday, in anticipation of the beginning of Ramadan to buy dates and figs for making special sweets. Another popular purchase is dried apricot for juice which is believed to suppress thirst during the fast and is drunk just before dawn. After the start of the holy lunar month, observant Muslims will abstain from eating and drinking from dawn to dusk (AFP photo)

Unknown assailants attack car of embassy employee in Tel Aviv

What is worrying and troubling us is lack of protection accorded to Jordanian embassy staff — ambassador

By Alia A. Toukan
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Unidentified assailants have attacked the car of a staff member at the Jordanian embassy in Tel Aviv over the weekend, the Kingdom's envoy to Israel said on Monday.

Mr. Omar Rifai said Thursday's attack was the second such assault against the same member of the embassy's staff whose flat was attacked late October.

The staffer shares the apartment with another embassy colleague in the affluent residential area of Ramat Gan, close to Tel Aviv. The area is known for harbouring religious Jews.

"The motives behind the attack are not known," Mr.

Rifai said. "We immediately notified the foreign ministry and the police to look into the matter and they promised to do their utmost," he told the Jordan Times.

"What is worrying and troubling us is the lack of protection accorded to Jordanian embassy staff in Tel Aviv, especially in light of the fact that this attack was in the same location and against the same person as the attack two months ago," he continued.

"I am sure that the Israeli authorities have the capability to afford the necessary protection for foreign embassy personnel in Israel," Mr. Rifai said.

The attack comes against a backdrop of increased tension in Jordanian-Israeli

ties because of the hardline policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, elected in May 1996, and the stalled Arab-Israeli peace process.

Israel's botched assassination attempt against a Hamas leader in Amman in September dealt a heavy blow to Jordan, once Israel's warmest Arab peace ally.

Jordan and Israel signed a peace deal in 1994 paving the road for full normalisation after 46 years of war.

Many Jordanian diplomats are reportedly harassed at the Israeli border or while travelling between the Jewish state and Palestinian-ruled areas.

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Arafat repeats promise to reshuffle cabinet over corruption — spokesman

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinian President Yasser Arafat has repeated promises to reshuffle his government, saying he had accepted in principle the mass resignation of his ministers, his spokesman said Monday.

Faced with renewed protests by the 88-member legislative council over his failure to conduct reforms, Mr. Arafat met for six hours Sunday night with council members from his own Fatah faction of the PLO, his spokesman Marwan Kanafani told AFP.

He told the council members he had accepted the mass resignation by most of his cabinet last August "quite a while ago, but he asked the ministers to continue in their duties temporarily until the cabinet shuffle is finished," he said.

Mr. Kanafani refused to give a time-frame for the cabinet reshuffle, saying: "It could happen at any time. Arafat is consulting with all parties."

Sixteen out of 22 ministers submitted an unprecedented mass resignation

on Aug. 1 after the council issued a report that corruption and mismanagement was rife in the Palestinian ministries and fingered three ministers by name.

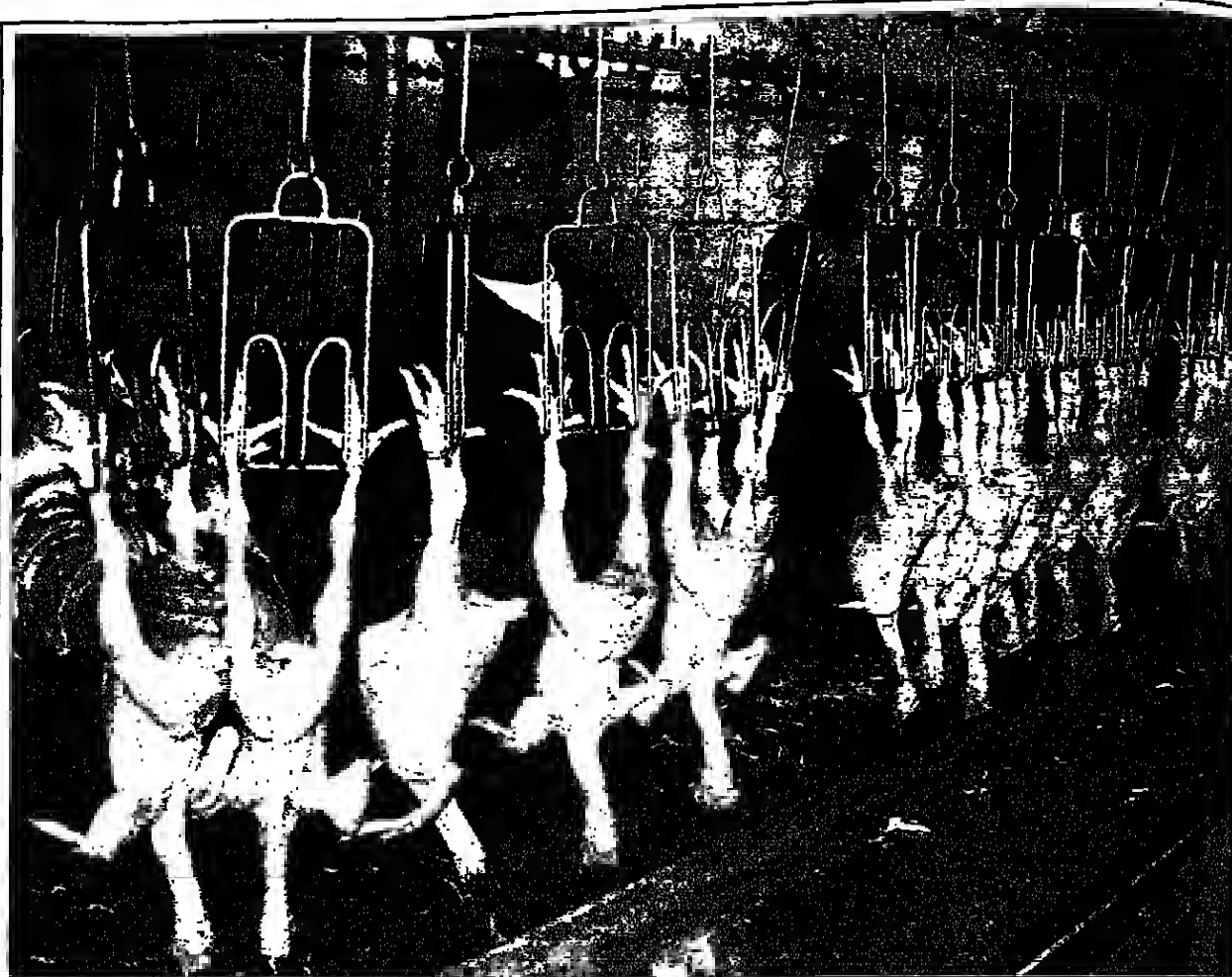
President Arafat never announced a position on the resignations, preferring instead to work behind the scenes to deal with the council's protests over cabinet change and corruption.

He has faced renewed heat on the issue after the council, which accuses Mr. Arafat of ignoring its decisions, suspended its

session last week to protest his refusal to conduct a cabinet reshuffle.

Meanwhile, President Arafat also agreed to form a committee to examine bills which the council has passed but which he has not signed into law. Mr. Kanafani said.

Mr. Arafat has yet to approve any of the numerous decisions passed by the council since it was created in January 1996, including a draft of a Basic Law for the Palestinian National Authority.



PREPARING FOR RAMADAN: Palestinians work in poultry slaughterhouse in Ramallah in the West Bank on Monday as the factory prepares for the Holy Month of Ramadan that started today (AFP photo)

Several arrested after Bahrain arson attack

MANAMA (AFP) — The Bahraini authorities have arrested several people in connection with an arson attack which destroyed a building in a Manama suburb on Sunday, causing no casualties, the local press reported Monday.

"The security forces have arrested a number of people suspected of carrying out this criminal act," an interior ministry spokesman said, quoted in the Al Ayam newspaper.

He said four masked men set the blaze on Sunday at dawn, after breaking into the five-storey building which houses a furniture showroom and the head office of the

company that owns the showroom and the premises. The building, located in Manama's western suburb of Sahla, was completely gutted but there were no casualties, he added.

The blaze caused damage estimated at \$6.75 million, according to a company official.

Bahrain has been hit by a wave of arson attacks since the start of the political unrest, in January 1994, led by Shiite opposition figures seeking the restoration of parliament dissolved in 1975.

A least 38 people have been killed so far in the unrest.

Women, children demand PNA free Hamas prisoners

NABLUS (AFP) — Some 200 Palestinian women and children demonstrated Monday in front of city hall in the West Bank town of Nablus demanding the release of members of Hamas held by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

Around 150 women, accompanied by some 50 children, held up pictures of their relatives, members of the Islamist group Hamas jailed by the PNA, and chanted slogans demanding their release, witnesses said.

Several of the children shackled their wrists together in mock chains to protest their fathers' imprisonment, the witnesses said.

"They imprisoned my father four months ago even though he had done nothing,

Isn't it enough he spent six years in an Israeli prison," said Sajid Aliwi, 12.

Another woman said her son, Sherif Nofal, "was the only support for our family. We've been living in a terrible situation since they arrested him."

Palestinian police arrested some 80 members of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) after two Hamas suicide bombings in Jerusalem in July and September which left 21 Israelis dead.

The PNA has been negotiating a security deal with Israel which would include a commitment to crack down on Hamas and other armed anti-Israeli groups in efforts to break the deadlock in the peace process.

Egyptian unions collect signatures against Iraq, Libya embargoes

CAIRO (AFP) — The Egyptian Journalists Union is planning a ceremony in a Cairo stadium Tuesday as it seeks a million signatures on a petition demanding that U.N. sanctions against Iraq and Libya be lifted.

"The Egyptian people... demand that the secretary general of the Arab League and the United Nations, Esmat Abdul Meguid and Kofi Annan, work seriously to save Iraqi

children and lift the embargoes imposed on the Iraqi and Libyan people," a union statement published in the Egyptian media said Monday.

The union also demands that the two officials seek a ban on economic embargoes because they are "weapons of mass destruction" against populations.

The president of the Association for Arab Women's Solidarity, Nawal Al

Sadawi, said Saturday that the effort had already collected "750,000 signatures."

"We will collect a million signatures and deposit them with the United Nations while we wait to begin court action against the United States and the United Nations for violating the U.N. charter and for starving the people of Iraq," she said.

Iraq has been under U.N.

sanctions since its 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The lifting of the embargo is tied to U.N. arms inspectors verifying that Iraq has no weapons of mass destruction or long-range missiles. Libya has been under U.N. sanctions since 1992 for its refusal to hand over to Washington or London two suspects in the 1988 bombing of a Pan Am flight over Lockerbie, Scotland, in which 270 people died.

Hizbollah presents 'double agent' it says duped Israel

BEIRUT (AFP) — The Islamic Shiite Hizbollah presented to the press Sunday a member it said was imprisoned by Israel and who later became a double agent during the Mossad.

At a press conference in a Shiite-populated suburb of Beirut, Hizbollah spokesman Nayef Karim said Moussa Zein, a former bodyguard to the late Hizbollah leader Sheikh Abbas Mussawi, had been involved in a "special operation."

Hizbollah officials said earlier that Mr. Zein had been sprung from an Israeli prison, where dozens of Lebanese nationals are held without charge, but they gave a different version of events on Monday.

The Israeli army said Monday it knew nothing about the Hizbollah's reported freeing of Mr. Zein. "We have no knowledge of such an incident," an army spokesman said.

Mr. Zein told reporters how he was arrested and about his detention in Israel and work "as a Hizbollah militant who infiltrated the Mossad."

He said he was arrested in July 1992 near the Beit Yehoun crossing point between Lebanon and Israel's self-declared "security zone" in southern Lebanon. He was taken to Israel and tortured, he said. "Afterward I succeeded in getting a message to Hizbollah which then gave me instructions. With an Israeli passport in the name Albert Pylos, I travelled with two Mossad agents named Jinan and Jidar in southeast Asia," he said.

Mr. Zein said he visited unidentified European countries and "afterward came to Lebanon where I remained in contact with the enemy until the Hizbollah leadership decided to end the operation."

According to Mr. Karim, Mr. Zein "travelled as part of inquiries Mossad was conducting about a supposed Hizbollah network in Europe and southeast Asia."

"Moussa Zein convinced the enemy [Israel] that he was working for them. In this role he worked for a long time passing them information transmitted to him by Hizbollah," Mr. Karim said.

Libya takes swipe at Turkey for Israeli alliance

TRIPOLI (AFP) — Libya criticised Turkey Monday, accusing the Turkish government of turning up its nose at the Muslim and Arab World in favour of its alliance with Israel.

"Contrary to the allegations of Turkish President Suleiman Demirel, the Turkish government is undermining Arab-Turkish relations by allying itself with Israel, the

enemy of Arabs and Muslims," the official JANA news agency said.

Turkey opens to Israel "its airspace and territory in order to practice attacking Arabs," JANA said.

The agency accused Turkey of "scoming the Islamic summit in Tehran," in which President Demirel took part in December "by receiving the Israeli defence minister as a

conqueror and announcing the joint manoeuvres with Israel and the United States." The exercises, which will be held in the eastern Mediterranean, begin Jan. 7, Ankara is trying "to scorn and annoy the Muslim World and the Arabs," JANA said.

The agency denounced "the continuation of Turkish hostility toward the Arabs" shown by Turkey's purchases

of Israeli weapons and its hold over the waters of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, which are vital for Syria and Iraq.

The joint air and sea manoeuvres have angered Arab countries and Iran and worried Greece, Turkey's traditional rival in the eastern Mediterranean.

'26 Egyptian prisoners died for lack of medical care'

CAIRO (AFP) — At least 26 detainees, some of them political prisoners, have died in the past five years in Egyptian prisons because of a lack of medical care, the Egyptian Organisation for Human Rights (EOHR) said Monday.

In a report issued Monday entitled "Awaiting Death," the EOHR said that out of the 26, five political prisoners died in 1997 in Egyptian penitentiaries.

"Lack of medical care in Egyptian prisons has become

part of the daily suffering of political prisoners, which takes place in silence and isolation from the outside world," according to the report on medical conditions in Egypt's prisons.

"Contagious diseases are widespread in most Egyptian prisons" because of "overcrowded cells, lack of proper hygiene... unclear water and lack of proper ventilation and of recreational activities," the group said.

Their report said that the

authorities simply do not wish to take the necessary measures to improve the situation.

"The 540 cases of sick prisoners included in the report are only a limited sample of hundreds of cases," it said, giving as an example Wadi Al Gudid prison, "where almost all prison cells include one or more prisoners who have contracted TB (tuberculosis)."

"The continuous lack of medical care in Egyptian prisons has resulted in hundreds of prisoners with TB and asth-

ma who are waiting for a slow death as a consequence of the deterioration of their health and the lack of the necessary medication," the report said.

"Some prisoners need urgent surgery or specialised medical care and follow up, all of which is not available in prison hospitals."

"Moreover, the prisons administration does not allow sick prisoners to receive medication even at their own expense," it said.

Iraq raises number of Hajj pilgrims to 3,000

BAGHDAD (AP) — The government will increase the number of Iraqi pilgrims allowed to perform the Hajj to Mecca from 1,000 to 3,000, the official Iraqi News Agency (INA) reported Monday.

It said the decision was taken during a cabinet meeting chaired by President Saddam Hussein. It did not give details.

Under a formula followed by Muslim nations, Iraq has a quota of 22,000 pilgrims that may perform the Hajj every year. Since the U.N. economic sanctions were imposed in 1990, the government has, however, allowed only 1,000 citizens to travel to Saudi Arabia in a bid to save foreign exchange.

It fears "that increased demand for the U.S. dollar in the money market will further reduce the Iraqi dinar's value. At present, 1,500 dinars buy one dollar while in 1990 a dollar equalled a dinar in the open market."

The Hajj is one of the main pillars of Islam and every able Muslim has to make the trip to Mecca at least once. The next Hajj month will fall in April. Last time, each Iraqi pilgrim paid travel agents about \$500 for the trip to Mecca, including expenses. Pilgrims also have to pay the government \$280 as exit visa fee. The total expense is equivalent to nearly 20 years' average salary of a civil servant.

Still, many Muslims save up for years to gather enough money for the Hajj. In Iraq, the government chooses pilgrims from a list of applicants, picking the most elderly and those who have never performed Hajj. INA said President Hussein instructed Iraq's financial authorities to ask Arab states to release an estimated \$1.7 billion in Iraqi assets frozen under the U.N. sanctions so that the government can increase the number of Iraqi pilgrims.

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

14:10 Sandakan
14:30 C.R.O.
15:00 Skippy
15:30 The Album Show
16:30 Square One T.V.
17:00 French Programmes
19:00 News in French
19:30 News Headlines
19:35 You Bet Your Life
20:00 Doc — Skeleton Coast
20:30 Encounter
21:10 Hollywood Remembers
22:00 News in English
22:30 Margaret Volant
23:15 Drama — Scarlet and Black

PRAYER TIMES

05:08 Fajr
06:30 (Sunrise) Dhuha
11:38 Dhuhur
14:23 'Asr
16:46 Maghreb
18:08 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church
Sweifeh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church
Tel. 632785.

St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590

Church of the Annunciation
Tel. 637440.

De la Salle Church Tel.

661757.

Terra Sancta Church Tel.

622366

Anglican Church Tel. 652826.

Armenian Catholic Church

Tel. 771331.

Armenian Orthodox Church

Tel. 775261.

St. Ephraim Church Tel.

771751.

Amman International Church

Tel. 865897

Evangelical Lutheran Church

Tel. 824328.

German-speaking Evangelical

Congregation Tel. 845457

The Latter-Day Saints Tel.

654932.

Church of Nazarene Tel.

675691.

The Evangelical Local Church

in Amman Tel. 811295

English-speaking

Latin Catholics Parish Tel.

614190.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Skies will be partly cloudy. There will be a chance of scattered showers particularly in the northern parts of the Kingdom and winds will be southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Amman 05/14
Aqaba 13/22
Deserts 04/15
Jordan Valley 12/21

Yesterday's high temperatures:
Amman 14, Aqaba 21 Humidity readings: Amman 45 per cent. Aqaba 37 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY
AMMAN:
Dr. Adnan Ashhab 602507
Dr. Ayman Al Muhtesib 875748
Dr. Jamal Jharah 547351
Dr. Abbas Al Hakim 885446
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Aserna pharmacy 637055
Al Salam pharmacy 636730

Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Nairookh pharmacy 623672
IRBID:
Dr. Mazen Abu Bakir 278852
Al Quds pharmacy 1
ZARQA:
Dr. Yousef Abu As'ad 989000
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Dept. 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121

Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 681100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 0853200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 0853200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity 64281/6
Aklieh Maternity 64244/2
Jahat Amman Maternity 642362
Mulhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607171
Shmeisani Hospital 644131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muhsen Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666126/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664114/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen 777101/3

Al-Bashir 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 602240/50
Amal Hospital 674155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865191
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983325
Zarqa National Hospital (09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990900

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital (02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital (02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital (02)247100

FOR THE TRAVELLER QUEEN ALIA AIRPORT

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15 Samaa (RJ)
07:15 Aqaba (RJ)
07:25 Damascus (RJ)
09:25 Abu Dhabi (RJ)

10:05 Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:05 Beirut (RJ)
10:15 Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:20 Cairo (RJ)
17:15 Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
17:30 London, Frankfurt (RJ)
02:30 Jeddah (RJ)

Other Flights
14:35 Istanbul (TK)
14:40 Munich (YP)
16:30 Rome (AZ)
18:30 Dubai, Damascus (EK)
20:00 Tel Aviv (LY)
20:10 Beirut (ME)
20:40 Cairo (MS)
22:20 London (BA)
23:35 Amsterdam (KL)
23:35 Larnaca (CY)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
07:45 Aqaba (RW)
09:05 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
09:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:20 Tel Aviv (RW)
18:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:20 Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES
Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
05:00 Aqaba (RJ)

06:20 Beirut (RJ)
08:25 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:15 Vienna, Brussels (RJ)
12:00 Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:00 Brussels, Paris (RJ)
12:15 London (RJ)
12:30 Frankfurt (RJ)
12:30 Cairo (RJ)
19:00 Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
19:30 Jeddah (RJ)
20:30 Damascus, Larnaca (RJ)
21:00 Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
21:00 Jeddah (RJ)

Other Flights
02:25 Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 Athens (OA)
15:40 Munich (YP)
15:45 Istanbul (TK)
17:30 Rome (AZ)
19:30 Dubai (EK)
21:20 Tel Aviv (LY)
21:40 Cairo (MS)

Royal Wings (RW) Flights
06:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
08:15 Aqaba (RW)
09:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
17:45 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
17:55 Tel Aviv (RW)
20:30 Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 Aqaba (RW)



Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali and Farouk Kilani, president of the Higher Judicial Council and the Court of Cassation, Monday meet at the Palace of Justice (Petra photo)

Majali pledges government's support in modernising judicial authority

AMMAN (Petra) — Prime Minister Abdul Salam Majali Monday pledged that his government will do all it can to develop and modernise the judicial authority to enable it to carry out its duties at the administrative and technical levels.

The government, acting upon directives from His Majesty King Hussein, will give due attention to the needs of the judiciary and enhance its independence, said the prime minister during a visit to the Palace of Justice.

The prime minister emphasised the need to offer the public swift and effective service that can be perceived by the ordinary citizen. He urged the judges

to expedite court procedures in settling cases to achieve this.

The government believes in freedom and participation of the three authorities, the executive, judicial, and legislative, in dialogues, he said.

Dr. Majali urged the courts to use Internet services in a manner that would enable Jordanian judges to benefit from cases handled by courts around the world.

He suggested that the judicial authority set up a specialised centre for research open to all judges in Jordan. He added that judges should have the right to take a sabbatical, during which they could study to increase their effi-

ciency and improve their performance.

During his visit, the prime minister met with Farouk Kilani, chairperson of the Higher Judicial Council, the heads of the Court of Cassation, and the president of the Higher Court of Justice, all of whom he congratulated on assuming their new posts.

Mr. Kilani, president of the judicial council and the Court of Cassation, delivered a speech voicing the judges' appreciation of the government's help in improving their performance. He added that only through justice can stability prevail in the country.

Judiciary independence provides the best guarantee for justice, he said.

Activists prepare petition to rally support for Parliament representation

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Activists are pooling their efforts to ensure that women get to future Parliaments under a quota after they were routed in the Nov. 4 elections, which returned an all-male Lower House.

The women, both representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and independents, Monday said they were about to launch a drive to collect one million signatures to back their demands.

The activists, working under a coordination committee, also plan to meet government officials to muster support for their demands, including amending the one-person, one-vote system.

"We have formed an organised and comprehensive plan to ensure a better representation of women in future parliaments," said Jordanian Women's Union President Amnah Zoubi.

Seventeen women candidates, including Jordan's first and only woman member of Parliament, Toujan Faisal, faced over 600 men in the Parliamentary elections and failed to win a single seat.

Following the disappointing results of the elections, many women said they faced discriminatory laws, which would remain unchanged by an all-male Parliament dominated by conservative tribal leaders and pro-government figures, and called for amendments to the electoral system.

Sociologists and researchers have blamed the one-person, one-vote system, tribalism, discrimination, financial constraints, and the strong social traditions as several factors working against women.

Many women followed the preference of their male relatives in choosing candidates to avoid angry reactions.

However, women activists and experts were divided on the quota issue, with some backing it as a temporary measure and others rejecting it, arguing that the quota might lead to unqualified women in the 80-seat House.

According to Ms. Zoubi, the committee has written several memos to the Prime Ministry and other government institutions and has planned meetings to negotiate the issue before the draft elections law reaches Parliament.

But there is a difference of opinion among the Cabinet members over the draft elections law as drawn up by the Ministry of Interior. Minister of Interior Nafith Rashid supported the idea of cancelling the quota system, which grants a specific number of seats in Parliament to Christians and Circassians, while others favoured keeping it.

Both sides, however, rejected the idea of a quota for women.

Second edition of Jordan Diary available

AMMAN (J.T.) — The International Press Office (IPO) of the Royal Court has released the second annual edition of the Jordan Diary, a reference on Jordan and the Middle East.

Due to the favourable reception of last year's edition, the IPO has decided to produce an annual edition of the Jordan Diary in English, as well as introduce a version in Arabic, according to a statement from the press office.

The diary is divided into three sections: the Hashemite Kingdom of

Jordan, which gives detailed information on the country, the Diary, and a reference section with important facts presented in a tabular format.

The first section gives details on the members of the Royal Family, the history of the Kingdom and the people who have lived in the region, from prehistoric times, government facts, including the members of government, the economy, social facts, and information on the range of cultural attractions, including archaeo-

logical and religious sites.

For its part, the reference section comes complete with updated maps, including maps of the Muslim World, all the world's geographical regions, and several world cities, as well as a list of the new members of the Lower House of Parliament.

In addition, the diary has a guide to Jordan-related sites on the Internet.

For more information on the 1998 Jordan Diary, contact the Jordan Book Centre.

Four receive 10 to 15-year imprisonment terms for plotting attacks against Israel

By Rana Hussein
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The State Security Court Monday sentenced four Islamist activists to prison terms ranging from ten to 15 years with hard labour after finding them guilty of possessing illegal weapons and plotting attacks against Israelis in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

The four, who have been linked with the outlawed Islamic group Bayat Al Imam (Pledge of Allegiance to the Leader), shouted "Allahu Akbar (God is great)" and "in the name of God we stand" and burst into laughter as the three-man military tribunal read the ruling.

The court first sentenced the four to death but later commuted the punishment on the grounds that they were seized before their plot was carried out and none had a criminal record.

Abdul Rahim Youssef, 25, and Mujahed Abdul Jawad, 29, were sentenced to ten years each, while brothers

Sa'oud Mohammad, 24, and Issa Mohammad, 21, were handed a 15-year jail term.

The tribunal comprised Justices Yousef Fa'ouri, Ahmad Ayash, and Mohammad Hunaiti.

"The defendants' acts of possessing explosives and plotting attacks against Israel is a threat to the national security of our Kingdom," Presiding Judge Fa'ouri told a packed courtroom.

Jordan, which signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1994, has the longest border with the Jewish state.

Lawyers defending the four said they would appeal the verdict at the Court of Cassation.

"I will appeal the verdict because I am not convinced of it," Defence Attorney Mohammad Dweik, who represented Messrs. Youssef and Jawad, told the Jordan Times. "My clients did not participate in plotting any attacks and did not possess any weapons or explosives."

The fifth suspect,

Sergeant Ali Mohammad, is still being tried at a separate military court on the same charges.

The prosecution had charged that the five men, apprehended in July, obtained two hand grenades and a number of automatic weapons to infiltrate Israel through Wadi Araba in southern Jordan during the month of Ramadan to launch an attack.

During the trial, the Mohammad brothers testified that they had planned to attack Israel during this year's Ramadan (the Muslim month of fasting) or the following one by using the arms they possessed.

But they said they changed their minds and buried the weapons under a tree in the courtyard of their homes because they all supported their families.

The court said it was not convinced of their argument.

"The court is convinced that the defendants were determined to use the weapons because they wrapped them to protect

them," Judge Fa'ouri said during the 30-minute court session.

The four men's attorneys repeatedly contested investigation procedures and claimed that their clients were tortured and forced to confess by security forces.

The court rejected their allegations, stating that "the defence failed to present any evidence to prove their clients were subjected to torture."

"The court is convinced that the defendants' confessions, which matched the evidence that was presented by the prosecution, were made willingly and with their free choice," the court said.

The prosecution had alleged that the five are affiliated to the outlawed Bayat Al Imam group. The same court last October convicted ten members of the Bayat group on charges of sabotage and lese-majesty.

The ten received prison terms ranging from two years to life imprisonment. Three others were acquitted

for lack of evidence.

The spiritual leader of the group, Mohammad Taher Mohammad, also known as Abu Mohammad Al Maqdisi, was sentenced to a 15-year prison term in Jordan in 1996 for "forming an illegal organisation and making and possessing weapons."

In an interview with a London-based Arabic magazine last year, Mr. Mohammad said he knew the four Islamists who were executed by Saudi Arabia in 1996 for their role in the bombing of a U.S. military base in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Five American servicemen and two Indians were killed in the November 1995 attack.

The four Saudi nationals told their interrogators before their beheading that they were influenced by the philosophies of various Islamic militant leaders, including that of Abu Mohammad Al Maqdisi.

Bayat Al Imam followers claim to be the true followers of Islam but do not attend mosque prayers or schools because they reject the entire system.

Aqaba authority to award study on free trade zone

AMMAN — The Aqaba Region Authority (ARA) board has decided to award an international company a feasibility study on transforming the city of Aqaba into a free trade zone, according to Deputy Prime Minister for Development Affairs and Minister of State for Prime Ministry Affairs Jawad Anani.

Speaking after a meeting by the ARA board in Aqaba, Dr. Anani said following the completion of the feasibility study in six months, steps will be taken to implement the project.

He recalled that the decision to turn Aqaba into a free trade zone had been taken at a Cabinet meeting that was chaired by His Majesty King Hussein.

During the ARA board meeting, a general review was made of the different projects that are to be carried out in Aqaba, including a \$600 million compound fertiliser project to be implemented by a Norwegian firm, an oil refinery, a gas pipeline connecting Egypt and Jordan, and a power generation project, as well as tourism projects along the southern shores and infrastructure projects such as roads and a railway line.

Discussion at the meeting also covered the question of giving priority to local Aqaba residents for employment.

Dr. Anani said the board members exchanged views on the implementation of these projects and associated problems and passed recommendations for solutions.

The meeting was attended by the ministers of industry, trade and supply and tourism, ARA President Marwan Dudin, and other officials.

Gas cylinder distributors, petrol stations plan to begin open strike Thursday

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Petrol stations and gas cylinder distributors will start an open strike Thursday in a bid to pressure the government to accept their demands to raise the commission they receive on sales, a spokesperson for the Petrol Stations and Gas Cylinder Distributors Association said Monday.

Mohammad Qaisi, the association's chairperson, said the decision, which was adopted unanimously by the general body of the association, was made following a delay by the government to approve their demands.

Mr. Qaisi told the Jordan Times that approximately 250 petrol stations and 900 gas cylinder shops around the country will participate in the strike.

The association members will stop dealing with Jordan Petroleum Refinery (JPR), the sole distributor of petrol and gas in the King-

dom, he added.

The current commission system, which has been in place since 1963, stipulates that gas distributors receive 18 per cent, or 350 fils, from the total price of each gas cylinder, and 1 per cent from the total cost of each litre of oil, diesel, and kerosene they sell.

Mr. Qaisi said their demand entails raising the commission on oil to 5 per cent and the commission for gas cylinders to 36 per cent, or 700 fils per tank. The current price for each gas cylinder is JD2.

"This old commission is not enough to cover our expenses and we must raise it if we want to stay in business," said Mr. Qaisi.

"In 1963, the vehicles that were used to distribute gas cylinders cost JD400 but now the most basic model costs JD13,000. Not only has this increased, but other necessary input prices have doubled since then," he added.

According to Mr. Qaisi, the association submitted a

"study" on their demands to the Ministry of Energy but "no decision has been made so far."

"We have reached a point where we either continue to incur losses or we stop working," said Mr. Qaisi, adding that the strike was scheduled to start on Dec. 1 but was postponed upon a request from Minister of Energy Mohammad Saleh Horani.

Mr. Qaisi said the total investments in this industry amount to JD50 million.

A ten-member committee was formed to continue negotiations with the minister, who is currently in an official visit to Baghdad, he added.

No ministry official was immediately available for comment.

But Abdullah Wahab Zoubi, director of the JPR, Monday told the JPR daily Al Ra'i that the refinery has nothing to do with the strike and the matter should be settled between the ministry and the distributors.

Mr. Zoubi added that the refinery's role is merely to "supply petrol stations and gas cylinder distributors with gas, oil, kerosene, and diesel."

"Rational actions should prevail in such cases... and I believe that the strike will have bad consequences on ordinary citizens," added Mr. Zoubi.

Mr. Zoubi hinted that the government is in the process of finding a solution to the commission issue.

In response, the chairman of the Jordan Consumer Protection Society, Mohammad Obeidat, said "any change in the commission percentage should not affect the ordinary consumers."

Dr. Obeidat called for forming a "national committee" to establish a framework for the "mechanism of amending prices of goods and commodities."

He said prices of several commodities have been raised following the government decision to float the prices of many necessary commodities.

Ba'ath Party elects new national leadership

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordan Socialist Ba'ath Party (JSBP) elected a new leadership at its annual conference, which concluded Sunday, a party spokesman announced Monday.

Tayseer Humisi, who was re-elected as the party's secretary general, said 11 members were elected to the "national leadership," which runs the affairs of the party in Jordan.

The party, a Jordanian offshoot of the Ba'ath Party in Iraq, lashed out at the government for what it described as "fluctuation" in its foreign policy with Arab countries, especially Iraq.

"Jordan has to review this policy and initiate proper ways to open its border [with Iraq] for the transport of goods and lift the unjustified sanctions," Mr. Humisi said at a press conference.

Mr. Humisi, a pharmacist by profession, urged the government to help in lifting the

seven-year-old sanctions against Baghdad, imposed since the 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The Kingdom's relationship with its eastern neighbour received a blow when Iraq executed four Jordanians for smuggling spare auto parts, which prompted Amman to expel seven Iraqi diplomats.

The JSBP at that time declined to issue a statement to criticising the executions.

Mr. Humisi said the government should not have been "hasty" in its reaction to the executions and should have dealt with the matter in a "very calm way."

"The issue of the executions was temporary, and it is over. Jordanian-Iraqi relations will not be affected by such a case," added Mr. Humisi.

Ahmad Nijadawi, a new member in the party's leadership, said the government should not have escalated the situation with Iraq.

"The other side [Jordan] should not place explosives

in the path of the relationship between the two sides," said Mr. Nijadawi.

Mr. Humisi said the party decision to take part in the Nov. 4 elections was made following the "surprise" decision by the Muslim Brotherhood movement and its political arm, the Islamic Action Front, to boycott the elections without consultation with other opposition parties.

"Last April, the opposition groups, including the Brotherhood, agreed to participate in the elections. But after that we were surprised by the Brotherhood's sudden and unilateral decision to boycott," added Mr. Humisi.

"We insisted on taking part in the elections because we wanted a place where we can express our opinion publicly," he said.

The JSBP was one of the few opposition parties that took part in the parliamentary elections, following the decision of nine other parties to boycott it. The party won one seat in the elections.

Mr. Humisi reiterated his party's opposition to any peace-making with Israel and said the Arab-Israeli problem is a "to be or not to be" struggle.

"It is a matter of liberating all of Palestine from the Jordan River to the shores of the Mediterranean. We will not accept normalisation with the Zionist enemy," he declared.

The party warned against amending the country's laws to limit public freedoms and further restrain the opposition parties.

The JSBP was referring to an expected government move to amend the laws on political parties, professional unions, and elections.

The new members of the JSBP high leadership are: Tayseer Humisi, Ahmad Nijadawi, Mohammed Humisi, Omar Abu Ragheb, Khalid Abu Zneimah, Ahmad Mulla, Samih Nimri, Fayiz Dabbas, Suleiman Jama'ani, Raja'e Nafa'a, and Awmi Khrais.

Court overturns ruling convicting man of slandering King

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The Court of Cassation last week overturned a September 1997 State Security Court ruling sentencing a man to three years in prison after being convicted of slandering His Majesty King Hussein.

The court ordered a retrial in the case of Adnan Omar, who was convicted on Sept. 29 of slandering the King.

The higher court, which was presided over by Judge Mohammad Raqad and included Judges Ma'moun Burbum, Nayef Ibrahim, Abdul Fatah Awamleh, and

Kamel Sa'id, ruled that "the state court depended on a witness who was charged with perjury during Mr. Omar's trial."

"The court relied on a statement by a witness who was transferred to the Amman prosecutor for perjury, and in the meantime, sentenced the defendant

before waiting for a result," the court stated.

The witness, Omar Rawhi, 19, admitted to the perjury charges while being tried by the Amman Criminal Court and was given a three-month imprisonment term one week before the ruling on Mr. Omar.

WHAT'S GOING ON

FILM

- * Children's film "Carry On (Again Doctor)" at the British Council, Jaha Amman at 5:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

- * Display of Bani Hamida handicrafts (trugs, cushions, and wall hangings) at Bani Hamida House, Jaha Amman (Tel. 658696/7), until Jan. 5.
- * "Modern Bulgarian Art" at Baladna Art

Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5537598), until Jan. 5.

- * Works by about a hundred artists from Iraq, Syria, Sudan, Lebanon and Jordan at Hamourabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street, until Feb. 20 (Tel. 5536098).
- * Exhibition of prints by Algerian artist Rashid Koraishi and calligraphy by Iraqi artist Hassan Massoudi, inspired by the poems of Mahmoud Darwish, at Darat Al Funun, Jaha Weibdeh, until Dec. 31. Also displaying paintings by Jordanian artist Nasr Abdul Aziz, and works by contemporary Arab artists.

Hardline general named as Vietnam's new leader

HANOI (AFP) — General Le Kha Phieu, a hardline conservative in the Vietnamese army, has been made head of the country's ruling Communist Party, state media announced Monday.

The 66-year-old head of the army's powerful political department, succeeds Do Muoi as the Vietnamese Communist Party secretary general, the official radio Voice of Vietnam said.

Gen. Phieu, the de facto number two in the army, was nominated last Friday to the top party post by a party central committee plenum in Hanoi, reliable sources said at the weekend.

He has had a relatively fast rise to power having only become a politburo member in 1994.

Gen. Phieu's nomination ends months of paralysis caused by the party's failure to find a successor for the

80-year-old Do Muoi who could guarantee continuity.

But his conservative attitude to the economy could worry foreign investors, analysts said.

Gen. Phieu had been a longstanding candidate to become the new leader but had faced opposition from within the party.

His appointment guarantees the army one of the top three positions in the Vietnamese regime and indicates the military's growing power in the country, diplomats say.

Gen. Phieu's elevation also completes the renewal of Vietnam's ruling trioka after the election in September of Tran Duc Luong as president and Phan Van Khai as prime minister. Both are considered reformers.

His nomination also maintains a traditional geographical balance within the lead-

ership. Gen. Phieu comes from the north. President Luong from the centre and Mr. Khai from the south.

The decision to replace Do Muoi surprised some diplomats as the plenum was officially meant to discuss economic questions only. Choosing party secretary general's has traditionally been left to the party congress.

However, as a Western diplomat said "rural unrest and the South Asian financial crisis precipitated the movement." Events at home and in the region had a profound impact on a party desperate to maintain its supremacy. The position of most conservatives has been strengthened.

General Le Duc Anh had represented the army in the previous leadership, as state president. If Gen. Phieu had not been appointed, the military would have been left

with no man in the trioka.

Now that the succession has been resolved, the future of desperately needed economic reforms will be crucial, observers said.

The plenum devoted much time to the economy. International financial institutions, aid donors and foreign investors have been pressing for faster reforms and are anxious to see what results come from the plenum.

"Le Kha Phieu will only let reforms go ahead as long as they will not affect political stability," another diplomat predicted.

Gen. Phieu has held political posts throughout his military career and his training as political commissar aligned him with the party's hardline faction.

Diplomats who have met him say he is unfamiliar with market economy mechanisms.



Sonia Gandhi, the Italian-born widow of former Indian Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, folds her hands in a traditional Indian gesture while praying at the memorial of her husband in New Delhi on May 21 to commemorate the sixth anniversary of his death. Sonia Gandhi, will campaign for the Congress party in the forthcoming elections to the federal parliament (Reuters photo)

Sonia Gandhi agrees to campaign for ailing Indian Congress party

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Sonia Gandhi, widow of India's former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, Monday agreed to campaign for the Congress party during national elections early next year.

A statement issued by her secretary said the Italian-born 51-year-old would campaign following strong appeals from the party in recent months.

It said Sonia Gandhi, whose husband was assassinated by a suicide bomber in 1991, had accepted a request by Congress President Shriam Kesri "at this difficult moment."

The Congress, which ruled India for almost four decades after independence, is vying for power with Hindu nationalists.

Both are looking to lead a new coalition. The Congress has however been rocked by a series of high-profile defections in the past week.

Sonia Gandhi has no political experience but wields tremendous behind-the-

scenes influence as part of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty.

Mr. Kesri hailed the decision "with all gratitude."

Analysts said Ms. Gandhi's step could produce a major boost for the Congress and possibly stem desertions by leaders, many of whom are siding with the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP, Indian People's Party).

The BJP overtook the Congress as India's largest parliamentary party last year.

Congress hardliners believe Sonia Gandhi, who became a full member earlier this year, has the charisma to revive the party, which has seen support erode since the early 1980s.

Revelations over the assassination of her husband were behind the elections being called.

Congress toppled India's minority coalition government in November after it refused to expel a member party linked to Sri Lankan Tamil guerrillas blamed for Rajiv Gandhi's assassination.

Afghan Taleban leader calls U.N. anti-Muslim

KABUL (R) — The supreme leader of Afghanistan's Taleban Islamic Movement, Mullah Mohammad Omar, has criticised the United Nations, accusing it of mistreating Muslims, the official radio Shariat reported Monday.

"The United Nations is totally influenced by colonial powers and, under the title of human rights, has either misled most Muslims from the just path, banished them from Islam or imposed economic restrictions on them under different names," the broadcast quoted him as saying in the southern town of Kandahar.

The leader of the Taleban, which controls about two-thirds of Afghanistan, did not specify any Islamic country that he thought had been

harmed by U.N. actions.

"Human rights are those issues which the Holy Koran considers right," he said, accusing non-Muslims of allowing excessive freedom for women that paved the way for adultery.

The Taleban authorities have imposed a strict Islamic law in areas under their control, banning women from education, working outdoors as well as ordering them to wear an all-enveloping "burqa" veil while going out of their homes — a treatment that has come under international criticism.

They have also introduced severe punishment for crimes such as death for murder, stoning to death for adultery, amputation of hands for theft and lashing for drinking.

Masai voters want their land rights respected

NAIROBI (AFP) — Masai tribespeople expect Kenya's next government to give them back the land around the Ngong Hills, west of Nairobi, which they claim has been allocated to other tribes, voters said Monday.

"The Masai want their land back. Other people have come here and used fraud to obtain our land," Daniel Kereya, a 24-year-old cattle trader, told AFP after casting his ballot.

"We also want a government that will maintain peace, start water projects, build roads and restore our veterinary training centre," he added — typical demands by voters all over the country.

Mr. Kereya claimed that a piece of land where a veterinary training centre once stood in the Ngong Hills had been given to non-Masai, especially members of President Daniel Arap Moi's Kalenjin tribe.

He speculated that young Masai would vote for the opposition, possibly Mwai Kibaki's Democratic Party.

But, he added, Moi's Kenya African National Union (KANU) party was still popular among the older generation.

"We are voting for KANU, but we expect them to take care of our land, which is being stolen by other people," said Joyce Moiko, 46, a mother of six.

She said most Masai women wanted the government to take drinking water closer to their villages because they were currently forced to walk long distances in search of water.

Queues in many parts of Masailand were moving slowly because most of the voters, clad in their traditional red garb — the men sometimes standing on one leg, like a stork, a Masai custom — were illiterate and had to be helped by presiding officers to mark the ballot papers.

"The law allows me to assist the illiterate voters. I mark the ballot paper for them once they tell which candidate they have selected," said Andrew Chege, a presiding officer.

Fighting flares up in two Cambodian border towns

ARANYAPRATHET, Thailand (AFP) — Fresh fighting flared Monday between Cambodia's warring factions in two separate towns on the Thai border, forcing more than 1,500 refugees to cross into Thailand, Thai military officers said.

The flood of civilians crossed near the Thai town of Aranyaprathet early Monday after a new wave of firefights erupted between troops loyal to strongman Hun Sen and those of his rival Prince Norodom Ranariddh, they said.

The fighting broke out near the town of Poipet, just across the border from here, early in the day just as fresh battles flared in the border stronghold of

O'Smach, 145 kilometres northeast of here.

Forces allied to the prince, ousted as co-premier by Hun Sen in July, attacked and won control of a military base at O'Bai Cheun near Poipet, Thai military said.

They expected further clashes to take place, as the government forces were likely to try and recapture the outpost.

"The fighting is increasing as the Cambodian elections get closer as both of the warring sides tries to control more territory ahead of the polls," a Thai military source here said.

"The fighting near here in eastern Thailand was taking place a kilometre from the border and one shell landed in Thai territory,

the military said.

Two of the displaced Cambodians were shot and injured in the fighting and sent to a local hospital.

The shelling from government troops near the village of O'Smach, the last stronghold of royalist forces in northern Cambodia, also spilled over into Thailand. Six shells fired by the forces of powerful Second Prime Minister Hun Sen landed in Thailand after they launched the attack late in the morning, military sources said.

O'Smach is perched on the border with Thailand and has been besieged by Hun Sen's better armed and more numerous soldiers since August.

Ethnic Albanian students set protest against Belgrade

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — Ethnic Albanian students in Serbia's troubled Kosovo province announced plans Monday for a protest to press demands that the Belgrade regime reopen Albanian-language schools.

The Independent Students' Union said the students would gather Tuesday at around 11 a.m. (1000 GMT) in the Kosovo capital for a "non-political" and "non-violent" protest.

The protest followed a series of marches organised in recent months with the aim of reopening Albanian-language schools, closed seven years ago, a year after Serbia took control of the previously autonomous province.

"Our protest has no political character. We demand unconditional restoration of school institutions," the students' union said in a text.

Students were told to avoid physical and verbal violence and to remain calm even if Serbian police used force.

The text called for "avoiding all provocations," saying the students were "determined" to protest until gaining "the main cause."

A restoration accord over public schooling in the province was signed in September 1996 by then Serbian President Slobodan Milosevic and the leader of Kosovo's Albanians, Ibrahim Rugova, but it was never implemented.

Refusing to accept the Serbian education programme, Albanians have formed an underground schooling system, not recognised by Belgrade authorities.

Kosovo is seen by the Serbs as the cradle of the Serb nation, but 1.8 million ethnic Albanians demand autonomy, the right to education in their own language and management of their own affairs.

Tension mounted in the province after two armed attacks on a police station in Podujevo and a decision announced last week by Rugova to hold underground parliamentary and presidential elections on March 22.

Since the start of this year, 52 ethnic Albanians have been sentenced to prison terms ranging from two to 20 years on charges of terrorism.



Newly elected Serbian President Milan Milutinovic is sworn in during the Serbian parliament session in Belgrade (Reuters photo)

New Serbian president takes office

BELGRADE (AFP) — The new Serbian president, Socialist Milan Milutinovic, took the oath of office in parliament Monday eight days after defeating ultranationalist Vojislav Seselj in a runoff vote.

Mr. Milutinovic, 55, formerly foreign minister of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), succeeded Slobodan Milosevic who stepped down in July when he switched to the federal presidency.

Seselj's Radical Party (SRS) which contested Milutinovic's victory, alleging the ballot was marred by massive fraud, booted at the new president and left the session when the oath service started. Earlier, the SRS deputy Dragan Todorovic presented the parliament diagrams that "showed" how Socialists "have stolen" a

large number of votes especially in the southern Serbian Kosovo province where ethnic Albanians, who make up the majority of the population, boycotted the vote.

However, the assembly speaker Dragan Tomic retorted that there was no point in such move, since the Serbian electoral commission had verified the vote results.

Mr. Milutinovic won 59.23 per cent of votes cast, while Mr. Seselj took 37.57 per cent, with 3.13 per cent spoilt ballots, the commission said last Tuesday.

Turnout on Dec. 21 was 50.98 per cent. A 50 per cent turnout figure was required for the vote to be valid.

However, the SRS accused Socialists of increasing the number of voters by electoral frauds.

While taking the oath, Mr. Milutinovic promised to "dedicate all his powers to

protect sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia, to respect freedom and human and civil rights, to defend the constitution and laws for the well-being of all citizens."

The vote was the fourth attempt to elect a successor to Mr. Milosevic. Previous ballots had failed to achieve the required 50 per cent turnout.

After legislative polls held on Sept. 21, the SRS became the second political force in the republic.

They have 82 of 250 seats in the Serbian parliament, behind a coalition which groups Mr. Milosevic's Socialist party (SPS), neo-Communists Yugoslav Left and New Democracy, that has 110 seats.

The Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) of Vuk Draskovic has 45 seats and five minor parties and coalitions have another 13.

WHO official says Hong Kong poultry slaughter may not be enough

GENEVA (AFP) — A mass slaughter of chickens and other poultry in Hong Kong will reduce the risk of new cases of deadly bird flu but will not eliminate it altogether, a top World Health Organisation expert warned Monday.

Health officials in Hong Kong have begun the process of having 1.2 million chickens, ducks, geese, pigeons, quails and partridges killed to try to stamp out bird flu, which has already left four people there dead.

The disease was once thought to be found only in chickens, but there have been 20 confirmed and suspected cases in humans since May.

David Heymann, the director of WHO's communicable diseases division, said the slaughter could not eliminate bird flu completely.

"There would be no risk any more if the chicken is the only source infected,"

he told AFP here.

"We know this case (virus) infects other birds, (but) whether or not other birds are infected we don't know. There are many birds in Hong Kong."

Stall holders in markets across the former British territory were ordered by letter to stop business immediately and kill all their chickens as well as other poultry that had been in close contact with them.

The unprecedented decision to kill all of the territory's chickens was made after the lethal H5N1 virus was discovered at a poultry farm and following the sudden death of chickens in Cheung Sha Wan in western Kowloon.

Mr. Heymann said the H5N1 virus was first spotted in Terns in South Africa in 1961, but insisted that "what is important is that there is not any evidence of great

massive human spread."

"We are not at this point worried that there would be a major outbreak."

He said the disease had passed between humans at least once, when a doctor caring for his son who died of the disease in May fell ill, but the chance of transmission was small.

"Because other contacts (of the doctor), including family members and other health workers, were not infected, that indicates there is a very low level of transmission. That's encouraging."

Another risk was in eating frozen chickens which had not been properly and fully cleaned out, as the virus could survive in the intestines of poultry at very low temperatures.

Mr. Heymann said the WHO was working on a vaccine against bird flu but did not think it necessary to order its manufac-

ture just yet. The rise in the number of reported cases was probably due to better monitoring, he added.

Meanwhile the WHO was holding talks with Chinese officials to determine if chicken from China could have been at the origin of the bird flu epidemic in Hong Kong.

"We want to determine whether there is a problem in China, in humans and poultry, and we are discussing how best to do that," he said.

In the territory, health officials say the slaughter of all poultry was the best way to get rid of any infected birds.

Only when they have collected the dead birds and checked and disinfected the stalls will market operators be allowed to reopen for business.

Surprised Italian burglars shot

BRINDISI, Italy (AFP) — A burglar was killed and his two accomplices wounded when they were surprised by the gun-toting son of the owner of the house they were robbing, police in this southern Italian town said Monday.

The three armed thieves had broken into a villa in the nearby town of Cerano while the 63-year-old owner was away playing cards with friends.

Woken by the noise, the owner's son, Massimo Spedicato, 32, grabbed a gun and sneaked down from the first floor to try

and escape and raise the alarm.

Spotting him, the burglars opened fire. Unhurt, Spedicato shot back, killing one and wounding the two others.

The two, both aged 21, made it to their getaway car and escaped, but were

later dropped off at a hospital for treatment where they were charged with attempted murder, armed robbery, firing in a public place and carrying weapons.

Police were still looking for the driver of the getaway vehicle.

S. Korean president-elect tries to stop government paper shredding

SEOUL (AFP) — President-elect Kim Dae-Jung Monday ordered a halt to the reported shredding of sensitive state documents as aides said he was "determined" to revamp South Korea's powerful intelligence organisation.

But newspapers said the "stop shredding" order had come too late in the case of the powerful National Security Planning Agency (NSPA), which had quietly disposed of "truckloads" of papers just before Mr. Kim was elected on Dec. 18.

The NSPA, the successor to the feared Korean Central Intelligence Agency (KCIA), has for decades spied on Mr. Kim's every move.

Meanwhile Mr. Kim's aides said he was taking a "determined but cautious" approach to revamping the NSPA.

The agency may face a budget cut or adjustments to strengthen its overseas missions and reduce internal political surveillance, which was misused in the past, an aide to Mr. Kim told AFP.

Mr. Kim, 73, a former dissident who has spent years in jail under past dictatorial regimes, appeared "determined to adjust the function" of the NSPA, he said.

The aide refused to give details of Mr. Kim's reform plan, calling it "a very sensitive issue which requires the consideration of our national interests."

"We are not sure when the president-elect will unveil his reform plan," he added. His comments came on the heels of the growing clamour over the allegations that the intelligence agency and other government departments had shredded sensitive documents which might be used against

them.

Last week NSPA chief Kwon Young-Hae reportedly acknowledged that his agency scrapped secret files which "might hurt Kim's feelings."

The agency has kept books chronicling every detail of Mr. Kim's life through eavesdropping and covert surveillance for decades.

On Monday Prime Minister Koh Kun pledged his cooperation to stop the shredding after receiving a note demanding that all government agencies "immediately stop destroying documents in an attempt to cover up the past."

"All confidential documents as well as related government notes and minutes of meetings must be preserved to minimise a power vacuum over the period of transition," Lee Jong-Chang, head of Mr. Kim's task force, said. Prosecutors, who Yonhap News Agency charged had been involved in their own frantic shredding, immediately followed up with a pledge to investigate those found to have already shredded documents which would shed light on policies and programmes of the current government and of major state projects.

"We will continue to investigate illegal shredders even after the inauguration of the new government" on Feb. 25, senior prosecutor Park Soon-Yong said.

The prosecutor, however, stressed that he had yet to secure evidence on allegations that since Mr. Kim's election shredders had been intensively used in government departments to destroy evidence of irregularities and mismanagement.

Mr. Kim's aides, concerned about a possible backlash, also ruled out any immediate legal action, saying the message was "mainly aimed at preserving documents needed to maintain policy consistency."

Under the law those shredding confidential government documents can be jailed for up to seven years.



China's Vice-President Qian Qichen is greeted by President Nelson Mandela at the start of their meeting at Genadendal, Mandela's Cape Town residence (Reuters photo)

Chinese FM holds talks with Mandela

CAPE TOWN (AFP) — South Africa will have no diplomatic relations with Taiwan "in any shape or form" after Jun. 1, President Nelson Mandela said Monday after talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Qian Qichen.

He was speaking to journalists at his official Genadendal home here, where the talks, which lasted around 30 minutes, were held.

"The policy of the People's Republic of China is that there is only one China, which we accept," Mr. Mandela said. "It is

therefore inconceivable that we should have diplomatic relations with Taiwan."

Mr. Qian, who arrived in the country Sunday to oversee South Africa's transfer of recognition from Taiwan to China on New Year's Day, gave his approval to Mr. Mandela's words.

"That's nice and clear," he said.

Mr. Qian was accompanied during Monday's 30-minute talks by senior foreign ministry officials and Chinese business leaders, while Mr. Mandela had

Foreign Minister Alfred Nzo and his deputy, Mr. Aziz Pahad, at his side.

Taiwan, which China is seeking to push into diplomatic isolation, had close ties with the former apartheid government, the relationship continuing after Mr. Mandela's African National Congress (ANC) came to power in all-race elections in 1994.

Mr. Mandela announced in November 1996 that Pretoria would switch recognition from Taipei to Beijing from the end of 1997.

Mowlam, security chiefs tackle Maze crisis after murder

BELFAST (AFP) — The British government undertook the embarrassing task Monday of reviewing its security policies for Northern Ireland's Maze prison where concessions to prisoners over the years have given inmates semi-autonomy.

The review, headed by Northern Ireland Secretary Mo Mowlam, follows the killing Saturday of leading loyalist Billy "King Rat" Wright. Three men were appearing in a magistrates court Monday charged with his murder.

Mr. Wright, leader of the Loyalist Volunteer Force, was gunned down while being taken from his cell block to the visitors' centre by minibus. The killing was claimed by the Catholic splinter group, the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA).

Northern Ireland Security Minister Adam Ingram, Maze Governor Martin Mogg and Ulster Prisons Director Alan Shannon

joined Mr. Mowlam for Monday's review at Stormont which will also examine the implications for the province and the Northern Ireland peace process of Saturday's murder and the revenge killing of one man and injury of three others in an LVF attack at a Dungannon, Co Tyrone Hotel hours later.

Ulster Unionist leader David Trimble called for a thorough inquiry into the murder and how weapons were smuggled into the Maze.

But with the peace

process again in the balance, both he and Martin McGuinness, chief negotiator for the IRA's political wing, Sinn Fein, at the talks, called on Catholics and Protestants to keep their nerves.

Prison officers who have long complained about the concessions being made to paramilitary prisoners at the Maze said only root and branch reform would prevent a repeat of Saturday's events.

They said the prison regime was dictated by politicians and the decree had been handed down from on high that prisoners were to be "treated with kid gloves."

The key event in the jail's history which led to concessions was the hunger strike of 1981 in which Bobby Sands and nine republicans starved themselves to death without obtaining the status they wanted of "political prisoners."

Since then the authorities have acknowledged that the Mr. Maze could never be an ordinary prison and that the para-military groups would always exercise considerable power.

Finlay Spratt, the Northern Ireland chairman of the Prison Officers' Association, told BBC Radio that trying to maintain order at the Maze was "like putting two boxers in the ring and tying one of the boxer's two hands behind his back."

Prison officers were hamstrung by concessions and said the blame for the

lux security had to be placed at a high level. Calls he and his officers had made for greater security had been "totally ignored."

The wings of the H-shaped blocks are virtually no-go areas for prison officers. Body searches of people entering the jail are no more than cursory while inmates are allowed to have sexual intercourse with visitors.

Both loyalist and republican prisoners use mobile phones, and drugs are readily available. Earlier this month a double murderer and IRA bomber was driven out of the prison after dressing up as a woman during a Christmas party.

In March a 40-foot tunnel seven feet underground, fitted with electric lighting, was found leading from a block where IRA inmates were held. It was only discovered after heavy rain made it collapse.

Despite warnings from prison officers of the dangers of housing republicans and loyalists in the same H-block, Wright and his fellow LVF inmates were moved to a block where they were kept only 30 yards from INLA prisoners.

The IRA and INLA maintain command structures which wield great influence and which are closely linked to organisations outside the prison.

It is widely accepted that the prison runs on a balance of power. The authorities run the jail but there are limitations to what they can do.

Great white shark kills diver off South African coast

CAPE TOWN (R) — South African police searched Monday for the remains of a diver believed to have been killed by a great white shark while spearfishing near Cape

Town Sunday.

"We resumed the search at first light this morning, but have found nothing yet," Police spokesman John Sterrenberg said.

He said witnesses had

told police they saw a shark's dorsal fin measuring about 50 cm cut the surface of the sea in the area where the missing man, James Hill, 39, had been diving.

"They saw turbulence in the water, followed by a cloud of blood," Mr. Sterrenberg said.

Mr. Hill had been spearfishing off Pringle Bay, a resort on False Bay

near Cape Town. Great white sharks often frequent the area.

Local newspapers quoted shark experts as saying the water in the area was unusually warm, which

would attract great whites and encourage their appetites.

They said sharks appeared to mistake divers wearing wet suits for seals; a regular part of their diet.

Killer turbulence sends U.S. jet plunging

TOKYO (R) — Passengers, flight attendants and serving carts were flung to the cabin ceiling of a United Airlines jumbo jet Sunday night when it plunged 300 metres in massive air turbulence on a flight from Tokyo to Honolulu.

A United Airlines spokesman said a 32-year-old Japanese woman died and 83 people, including nine stewardesses, were injured in the 33,000-foot-high drama.

Flight 826, bound for Honolulu with 374 passengers and 19 crew members, was two hours into its flight from Tokyo's main international Narita airport when it flew into turbulence.

Passengers, most of them Japanese holiday makers, were just finishing their evening meal when the Boeing 747 was buffeted by strong winds sending it rearing through the skies.

"We have just hit air turbulence and the aircraft descended 300 metres. There is no danger of a crash," the pilot told panicked passengers on the plane's intercom.

The accident took place over the northern Pacific about 1,800 km east of Narita.

A United Airlines spokesman said 10 of the 374 passengers were injured seriously enough to remain in hospital.

"The seat belt sign was on when the plane was hit by severe turbulence," airline spokesman Tony Molinari said. "There had to be folks who weren't belted."

The pilot decided to return to Tokyo because of the injuries on board, he said.

The plane landed back at Narita at 2.25 a.m. (1725 GMT), five hours after it had taken off.

A passenger video taken of the interior of the plane and shown on Japanese television showed screaming passengers being flung around

the cabin and oxygen masks banging from the ceiling.

Meals littered the cabin and the ceiling was damaged.

The serving carts were thrown to the ceiling and then crashed back down on us," a passenger told Japanese television.

"Bang. People without seat belts were thrown out of their seats," another passenger said.

Most of the injured were either standing or sitting without their seat belt on in the back section of the plane, a popular place for passengers to congregate near toilets at the end of in-flight meals.

A Federal Aviation Authority (FAA) spokesman in Washington said the "fasten seat belt" sign was on but preliminary reports indicated some people were moving about the cabin.

Ambulances and fire engines stood by as the aircraft touched down.

Passengers with broken limbs, neck injuries and bloodied faces were helped off the airliner.

Several injured had neck braces fitted before they were carried from the plane on stretchers.

The FAA spokesman said that while Japanese authorities would handle the formal investigation, the FAA would look at the incident "because we're always interested in turbulence issues and whether procedures were followed."

The plane's flight data recorders will be returned as soon as possible to the National Transportation Safety Board's laboratory in Washington for analysis.

An NTSB spokesman said the so-called "black boxes" could possibly provide useful information about the incident and how it was handled by the crew.

United Airlines is a unit of UAL Corp.



Russian President Boris Yeltsin gestures during the awards ceremony in Kremlin (Reuters photo)

Smiling Yeltsin in form for Kremlin awards ceremony

MOSCOW (AFP) — A smiling President Boris Yeltsin appeared on form as he presented a prestigious award to the head of the Russian Orthodox Church, Alexis II, at a Kremlin ceremony Monday.

Mr. Yeltsin, who returned to work a week ago after a two-week lay-off caused by an acute chest infection, thanked the head of the Orthodox church for his efforts to bring "peace and reconciliation" to Russia.

"I am convinced that the coming year will be better than 1997. In 1997, we had stabilisation, a financial stabilisation, now we have to work to secure more, to continue our progress," the president said.

The Russian patriarch, who is close to Mr. Yeltsin, blessed the Kremlin chief and wished him success in 1998.

The 66-year-old Russian president stood throughout the 50-minute awards ceremony, appearing in good form if a little congested.

— and joined in a champagne toast afterwards.

The president, who checked himself out of a Moscow clinic which had treated him for his chest infection despite medical advice, made no reference to plans for a forthcoming holiday.

Doctors had wanted Mr. Yeltsin, admitted to the Barvikha clinic west of Moscow on Dec. 10, to extend his convalescence in order to ensure he avoided a relapse.

Mr. Yeltsin was struck down by a bout of double pneumonia in January as he recuperated from multiple heart bypass surgery the previous November.

Monday's awards ceremony had been postponed by Mr. Yeltsin at the last minute from Dec. 9, when the first of the more than 60 known victims of the Irkutsk air disaster in Siberia were buried.

Admitted to Barvikha the following day with a "chill," officials spent two weeks denying rumours that Mr. Yeltsin was seriously ill and had suffered a new bout of heart problems or a brain spasm.

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Sounding the alarm once again

AS 1997 draws to an end, His Majesty King Hussein sounded yet another alarm about the dangers that lie ahead should Israel continue to resist calls for the speedy implementation of the Oslo accords. "I can't begin to contemplate what dangers and threats the collapse of the Palestinian-Israeli peace would mean to the region," the King warned in a recent interview with the Philadelphia Inquirer. The King expressed his deep disappointment with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's long record of breaking one promise to him after another. "There have been so many broken promises, so many provocative moves, that you begin to wonder whether there is an attempt to destroy the Oslo peace process," the Monarch was quoted as saying to the U.S. newspaper.

The King's downbeat assessment of the prospects for peace in the Middle East is not without a cause. The Israeli leader has been caught breaking pledges to the Palestinians, the neighbouring Arab countries, the U.S., Europe and even to his own people. The credibility of Prime Minister Netanyahu has dipped so low throughout 1997 that one wonders if there is still room for his redemption.

Netanyahu's liberal exploitation of even false excuses and pretexts have gone too far especially when his government tried to play up alleged Jordanian fears from the establishment of an independent Palestinian state to justify the retention of some 20 kilometres along the west of Jordan River. "This (Israeli pretext) is absolute nonsense," the Monarch said. "If anyone wants to find an excuse not to make progress on the peace process, they should find another excuse," the King emphasised. "And in a crystal clear rebuff of all Israeli claims that Jordan has a lot to fear from a Palestinian state, the Monarch said that a Palestinian state would not be a threat to Jordan."

This provocative and false manipulation of Jordanian-Palestinian relations by Israel is a far cry from the truth of the matter. Neither Jordan is a threat to a Palestinian state nor a Palestinian state is a danger to Jordan. Jordan would be the first Arab country to extend recognition and support to a free and sovereign Palestinian state established on Palestinian soil. Israeli leaders would be well-advised to leave Jordanian-Palestinian relations to the two Arab parties to deal with and settle in a fraternal and amicable manner. The immediate issue is Israel's non-fulfilment of its commitments to the Palestinians under the Oslo accords. This is what haunts Jordan and disturbs and worries all of us.

"If hope disappears," the King cautioned, the majority of the people belonging to the peace camp would feel that the extremist minority alone is calling the shots and dictating the regional agenda. It is therefore up to Netanyahu to make 1998 a year of hope instead of another year of disappointment and frustration by freeing himself from the grip of the minority extremists within the Israeli ranks.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Rai's Fahed Faneh described the new Palestinian-Jordanian agreements signed in Ramallah as pointless, saying it is not up to either side to decide on the flow of trade between them. It is Israel that controls the trade traffic between Palestine and Jordan and it is Israel that has been obstructing such trade, Dr. Faneh said. Even before the creation of the self-rule system in Palestine, the Palestinians were exporting goods to Jordan across the Jordan River, but at the same time Israel prevented Jordanian exports to Palestinian territory, he noted. The same situation, said Dr. Faneh, will be maintained and the flow of goods will continue to move in one direction: to Jordan as long as Israel obstructs Jordanian exports to the Palestinians, thus Jordan will remain the loser in the trade deal signed in Ramallah, he added. The writer said that in view of this situation Jordan should realise that it cannot make peace with Israel which responds with an economic war and it should not claim that it has strong relations with the Palestinians when in reality these relations are less than normal and indeed, strained.

Al Rai's Bassam Emoush said it is regrettable to see planes flying from Russia and Iceland to Iraq carrying relief supplies to the destitute Iraqis while Islamic countries like Turkey offer their territory to the Western powers to launch aggression on Iraq, a Muslim nation. The Russian and Icelandic planes carried Santa Claus and gifts to the children of Iraq because they have economic and other interests in that country and want to see the sanctions lifted, he noted. But the Arab and Islamic countries also have economic and other interests in Iraq but they fail to agree on a single air shipment to the Iraqi people, the writer added. He said that Jordan and Syria, the closest neighbours to Iraq are called on to follow Russia's lead and open the door for air lifting relief supplies badly needed by the Iraqi children and women. The writer said he was sure that if Royal Jordanian succeeds in opening the door for flights to Baghdad Jordanian companies and the Jordanian people will donate everything possible to save the Iraqi nation.

The View from the Fourth Circle

A unique week for the people of the Middle East

By Rami G. Khouri

THIS WEEK shall have seen all the people of the Middle East commemorating Christmas, Hannukah or the start of the Holy Month of Ramadan. This simultaneous celebration of three leading religious occasions by Christians, Jews and Muslims should prompt us collectively to appreciate the very important, very public role that religion plays in this part of the world — and perhaps also to re-examine religion's actual and potential contribution to shared Abrahamic values such as justice, love, tolerance, piety and peace.

The Middle East is important for the study of religion in public and national life, because of the extraordinarily ancient legacy in this domain. Expressions of human values and identity via religion and cult are visible in the indigenous archaeological record as far back as the first permanent villages of the Neolithic period, nearly 10,000 years ago. Perhaps the most conspicuous human habit — other than the purely biological need for water, food and shelter — that has remained unchanged throughout the entire recorded span of human civilisation is the centrality of faith, religion and cult in communal life. Today as ten millennia ago, in Amman or any other city or village in this region, the monuments of worship and faith remain the most strategically located, monumentally built, and lavishly decorated of any man-made structures. It is not by coincidence that the most easily recognised symbols for many cities around the world are the monuments of faith — Notre Dame in Paris, Al Haram Al Sharif/Temple Mount in Jerusalem in Palestine/Israel, the new blue mosque in Abdali in Amman, the monumental churches/mosques of Istanbul, the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, the Greek temples of the Acropolis in Athens, and many other such monuments to God and gods.

The three successive Abrahamic monotheistic religions — first Judaism over 3000 years ago, then Christianity some 2000 years ago, and then Islam over 1400 years

ago — were unique manifestations of spirituality — but also more than that. They were and are a powerful, codified and organised means of expressing personal and communal identity through mechanisms that also encompass political and national identity. The intimate historical ties between Abrahamic religions and political authority in the Middle East have frequently seen faith, identity, politics and nationalism merge into a single force. This has always been the case, despite the fact that our region comprises so many religions, and that the dominant local religious identity has changed so many times since people started keeping records of such things about five millennia ago.

As the modern Middle East in the past century has absorbed the latest global reconfiguration — the Euro-manufactured state or nation-state — it has also given religion a leading role in the make-up of the state, the sharing of public power, and the redress of grievances by the citizenry if the state abuses its power. This is evident, for example, in the construction of the Lebanese state, the allocation of parliamentary seats in Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and other countries, the very birth of Israel, and many other cases. Religion and public life in this region comprise a very old, very powerful phenomenon. But has this combination been effective in translating religion's noble morality into a better life for its adherents?

The Abrahamic religions in the Middle East today often appear contradictory in their public roles: they can fuel extremism, violence and the most atrocious political vulgarity, but they also routinely provide the moral foundation for political action to activate shared Abrahamic values such as justice, humility, and mercy. The high profile that religion enjoys in the Middle East today — among all three leading faiths — combines good and bad, hope and fear, life and death. Religion confronts injustice, rejects oppression, and mobilises for freedom and justice, but the same religion is also used by some to

discredit the validity and even to kill the children of "the other." The Abrahamic religions have played this public role since their inception, and they will continue to do so for as long as they persist. Let us stop being surprised by the public, political and national dimensions of religion, and instead focus our attention on why religion is used for violent aims as well as for humane ones.

Secular Western nation-states often point to religion in the Middle East as a cause of concern for regional stability and world peace; Middle Eastern Abrahamic societies often point to the advent of the Western secular nation-state as a major cause of the problems in our fragmented region. The truth is probably somewhere in between — for we still have not fully resolved the consequences of the convergence among ancient identities, established religions, and young states.

Religion, politics, identity, public power, nationalism and other such important phenomena in our region are slightly different facets of a single dynamic: people's determination to define and to organise themselves in a manner that gives meaning to their lives, and that helps to ensure a life of security, dignity and well-being for their children and future generations.

We of the Abrahamic faiths — spurred by our shared, core moral dictates of justice, humility and righteousness — should work harder, together, to rid ourselves of simplistic notions about the appropriateness or otherwise of religion in public life in the modern world. Rather, we should work harder, together, to understand the place of religion in the lives of individuals and communities. This week offers a unique opportunity in recent history to recommit to this worthy goal. All men and women of religion should use this week and the coming weeks to speak out more forcefully about what it really means to wish one another a Merry Christmas, Happy Hannukah, and Ramadan Kareem.

Too special a relationship makes Britain a 'feeble' ally

By Charles Macchling Jr.

WASHINGTON — The ongoing crisis with Iraq has thrown into sharp relief the foreign policy vacuum in Britain. It is time to ask whether British parrot of U.S. foreign policy has so diminished Britain's standing as an independent force in world affairs as to make it more of a diplomatic encumbrance than an asset.

A strong Britain, acting independently of America, could have preempted the role of Russia as mediator and thereby forestalled Russian resurgence as a power factor in Iraq and the Middle East. Instead, Britain was publicly dismissed by the Iraqi foreign minister as an American "stooge."

Only two generations ago Britain was the dominant power in the region. It governed Palestine under a residual League of Nations mandate; it exercised suzerainty over the Suez Canal and Egypt; it created Iraq and Jordan out of Hashemite roots; it stood behind

the Anglo-Iranian oil concession in Iran.

Today Britain dares not brave American displeasure by interven-

...in almost every Security Council vote, Britain backs the United States, often paraphrasing the U.S. position in more elaborate language.

ling diplomatically in the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. It does not even publicly support its multinational allies like Shell and British Petroleum for Caspian oil pipeline contracts in the way that France backs Total for Iranian offshore gas.

Britain takes justifiable pride in its behind-the-scenes diplomacy. In the latest confrontation, it helped to prevent Russia and France from abandoning the coalition. It urged Bill Clinton to take a softer line on sanctions and to tone down his demonising of Saddam Hussein. In the Gulf war, and as peacekeeper for the United Nations and NATO in Bosnia, it has been a valiant ally.

But in almost every Security Council vote, Britain backs the United States, often paraphrasing the U.S. position in more elaborate language.

The reason for this abdication of independence in the name of allied solidarity is well known — it is the Falklands war of 1982. Withdrawal of the British task force under severe battering by Argentine fighter-bombers was averted only when Secretary of Defence Caspar Weinberger opened the flood-gates of U.S. supplies and provided access to U.S. electronic intelligence. The recapture of the

Falklands saved Margaret Thatcher's government, and her gratitude was boundless.

Thenceforward, prime ministers have endorsed every twist and turn of American policy even when it trespassed on British interests.

The Thatcher government raised not a whimper over the Reagan administration's gratuitous invasion of Grenada, a Commonwealth country. When the Helms-Burton legislation extended U.S. criminal jurisdiction to foreign firms investing in Cuba, Britain wrapped its opposition in the mantle of the European Union (EU) and the World Trade Organisation.

The Thatcher legacy has extended to the World Court, where the British judge joined the American judge in dissent in the court's 11-to-3 decision condemning the CIA's not so secret war against Nicaragua.

France, which sometimes pushes distance from U.S. policy to unnecessary levels, is in some ways a more useful diplomatic

asset. France's credibility as mediator, and its support of the United States in the Security Council when it so chooses, carry more weight than if it were a rubber stamp.

Canada, whose distinguished U.N. peacekeeping record gives it diplomatic clout out of proportion with its military strength, has enhanced its credibility as an ally by its outspoken opposition to U.S. policy toward Cuba.

Britain's limp-like clinging to the outdated "special relationship" reduces its foreign policy to that of a satellite. The habit of endorsing even misguided U.S. positions gives a green light to U.S. advocates of unilateral action. It reinforces French-German determination to exclude Britain from moderate decision-making.

The writer is an international lawyer and former U.S. State Department adviser. This article is reprinted from the International Herald Tribune.

The coming year of insubordination

By G.H. Jansen

AT YEAR'S end, and year's beginning, there is, if not revolt and revolution, at least insubordination in the air in the Middle East on several different fronts where recognised patterns of subordination and control are being challenged and changed. And this will set new and turbulent patterns for political life in this area in 1998.

It is simply because of the negative circumstances of the inexperience and incompetence of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his ministers that there is insubordination, amounting almost to open revolt, in his coalition and the ranks of his government's supporters in the Knesset. Thus, there was debate for many weeks on the details of Netanyahu's budget proposals which had to be adopted by the end of December, if the government was not to run out of funds early in the new year. There was this delay because the all-too-many parties in the governing coalition refuse to accept budgetary discipline since all these parties want more money to spend on their pet programmes, especially those parties connected with various welfare agencies in the Jewish state. Since the government is a multiparty coalition it is peculiarly susceptible to blackmailing threats from constituents to withdraw confidence from the coalition and bring about its downfall.

Typical of the chaos and confusion reigning in the coalition was the action of a government minister who, when he tried to withdraw a single provision from the budget bill, used the wrong formulation and ended by withdrawing the whole complex and delicately balanced budget which had to be reconsidered in its entirety from the beginning.

The battle of the budget was capped by cabinet disagreement and splits in the coalition Knesset representation over whether or not to hand over land to the Palestinians, as required under the Oslo accords signed by Israel in 1993 and 1995. Indeed the Israelis spent so much time debating amongst themselves over the peace process that negotiations with their Palestinian peace partners stalled and then halted altogether, precipitating a major crisis between Israel, on the one hand, and the Palestinians, Arabs and the U.S. and Europe, on the other.

Since Netanyahu's main aim is to stay in power by maintaining his coalition rather

than imposing his will on his coalition partners on unpopular measures or progressing on the peace front, recurrent crises will be a distinguishing feature of Israeli politics and

attempt to get him to change a modus operandi he established more than 30 years ago. Unfortunately, he can, literally, afford to take this attitude because he has always

Since Netanyahu's main aim is to stay in power by maintaining his coalition rather than imposing his will on his coalition partners on unpopular measures or progressing on the peace front, recurrent crises will be a distinguishing feature of Israeli politics and Israeli-Arab-international relations in 1998.

Israeli-Arab-international relations in 1998. Israel's Arab neighbours will, naturally, try to take advantage of the political division and confusion prevailing in the Jewish state to insist that Washington exert pressure on Israel to honour its commitments to the Palestinians. In response Israel could marshal its military forces to attack its major adversaries, Hamas in Palestine and Hizbollah in Lebanon. This use of force will threaten regional peace and security.

There is the same insubordination in operation on the other side of the fence from the state of Israel, that is, in the ranks of Palestinian President Yasser Arafat's semi-autonomous "National Authority." Until the end of 1997 he ran his PNA as his private fiefdom, appointing his ministers and officials and taking every decision of any importance himself personally. This excessive centralisation of authority has inevitably led to so much inefficiency and delay in implementing governmental policy that the Palestinian Legislative Council decided to suspend all its meetings for two weeks in protest at the situation. The council demanded that Arafat ratify dozens of laws passed by the legislature since its establishment in March 1996, laws which he has simply ignored. The hope is that the limited boycott will force Arafat to decentralise decision making and reform his corrupt administration. Any such change is wholly unlikely, however, because the council cannot expect to "teach an old warrior new tricks" and Arafat is very much the "old man" who simply ignores every

insisted on retaining exclusive control of the Palestinian National Authority's (and PLO's) financial affairs and money supply. Because of the rising clamour for reform, particularly from leaders of his own Fatah movement, and his loss of prestige because of the collapse of the peace process, it will be extraordinary if Arafat can continue ruling by decree, shutting out the legislature.

At long last there is what may be justly called a "revolt" and not just insubordination against the cruel and conscienceless sanctions regime which the U.N. Security Council, dominated by the U.S. and Britain, has clamped on Iraq, bringing starvation to its 20 million people. Most affected are the children and the sick who are deprived both of food and medicine. A million and a half have already died from sanctions, and 7,000 die every month at present. It was left to Russia and the maverick ultranationalist politician, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy to summon up enough courage to defy the U.S., U.K. and the U.N. itself by sending an aircraft loaded with medical supplies into Baghdad on Christmas day, the first flight to use the Iraqi capital's airport since January 16th, 1991.

The Russians were promptly followed by Iceland and Egypt, which each sent plane loads of supplies to Iraq. In the Egyptian group of sanction-busters were well-known personalities such as Nawal Saadawi, the feminist novelist, and Yousef Chahine, a world-class film director. Other states could well join the sanction busters because for some time now there has been a growing

mood on the international scene to challenge the U.S. One reason for this being that in the vital area of West Asia, the U.S. is too blatantly one-sided in its object and total support of Israel, a delinquent country on the world scene. Thus, further revolt against the U.S., at least on the humanitarian level, can be expected in the months to come. (A few years ago it would have been expected that an independent country like India would have given such a brave humanitarian lead; but no longer alas!)

Once enough other countries follow the Russian lead, the punitive pattern of U.N. sanctions — favoured by the U.S. and U.K. and applied to several other countries as well as Iraq — would be smashed altogether. That would be no bad thing because the U.S., the sole remaining superpower, has clearly been misusing its position to persecute various people because it is confronting their rulers.

A rigidly established pattern of authority will assuredly be increasingly challenged in Iran thanks to reform minded President Mohammad Khatami. And a renewed and liberalised Iran can be expected to reemerge as an independent force in the region. Although Khatami has been saying sweet words about the "great American people," the powers-that-be in Washington want nothing of reconciliation with Tehran. This means that the Iranians, a proud and independent-minded people who have a sustained record of hostility towards the Americans, will maintain their distance from Washington while building bridges with Europe and the Arab World. And if Iran gives an anti-American lead, some Arab countries — however hesitant their rulers may be — will almost certainly follow that example. Indeed, even the docile Egyptians are showing signs of independence from their U.S. financiers.

Finally, if traditionally insubordinate and stubborn Turkey ignores the good advice of Europe and the U.S. and continues to provoke Greece, both in the Aegean and on Cyprus, there could be a conflict in the eastern Mediterranean which would wreck the U.S. policy of relying upon and building up non-Arab regional powers.

G. Khouri
East

Earth has lost two-thirds of its forests

Despite a quarter-century of intensive campaigning, the world's forests are shrinking more quickly than ever. Nicholas Schoon, environment correspondent, looks at the latest attempt to sum up the destruction.

NEARLY TWO-THIRDS of the earth's original forest cover which existed before civilisation took off has now disappeared, the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) said recently.

Despite Earth Summit, television documentaries and all the public awareness of deforestation, the rates at which woodlands are being logged out, burnt and turned into farmland or scrub has risen in the 1990s.

If current trends continue, then within a decade there will be virtually no natural forests left in several countries scattered around the globe. WWF gave Pakistan, Haiti, Madagascar and the Philippines as examples.

Francis Sullivan, the worldwide conservation body's chief forest campaigner, said that would be true of the entire planet half-way through the next century unless there was a turnaround. "In one generation we are facing the almost complete loss of natural forest."

WWF has joined with the respected, Cambridge-based World Conservation Monitoring Centre in drawing up maps of each continent showing their original forest cover and what is left now. They admit it is impossible to be completely accurate when the rate of forest loss is accelerating and many poor countries keep poor records.

But their overall conclusion is that 81 million square kilometres existed 8,000 years ago, at the end of the last Ice Age, covering just over 60 per cent of the earth's land surface if ice-covered Greenland and Antarctica are excluded. Today that has fallen to just over 30 million square kilometres.

While attention has focused on the forest fires in Southeast Asia in the past few weeks, the head of WWF's Brazilian organisation told a London press conference that the burning of forests, brush and pasture in the Amazon this year was worse than ever. The burning season lasts from July through to November.

Several airports in the region had been closed. A huge pall of smoke has been hanging over Manaus, a city in the heart of the jungle with more than a million people, and there had been an upsurge in respiratory illnesses, said Garo Batmalian. There had been a 25 per cent increase in the numbers of fires recorded by satellite.

The latest government estimate for deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon was 15,000 square kilometres a year, an area nearly as large as Wales — but that dates back to 1994. The Brazilian environment agency has suffered financial and technical problems in trying to record the destruction from space, with three recent changes in satellites and incomplete coverage.

Logging for timber is only part of the problem. The forests are disappearing to provide pasture, plantations and cropland — although sometimes the cleared land is only used for a few years before its fertility collapses and scrub invades. This is what happened to Britain, which was mostly covered in forest, over the past 4,000 years.

Apart from wiping out literally millions of plant and animal species, the forest loss is altering local climates, hastening water run off and even damaging sea fisheries and reefs as silt is washed rapidly off the land. Forest burning also produces much of the extra carbon dioxide humanity is pouring into the atmosphere, threatening global warming.

The WWF wants ten per cent of each different type of forest, in each country, around the globe to be given permanent protection. Several countries, but not as yet Britain, have pledged to do this. Mr. Sullivan said WWF's top priority was to get Indonesia, Russia, the U.S. and Brazil to agree.



Tourists enjoy an autumn day under the famous ginkgo trees of the Sunch'on city outskirts in South Korea (photo by Suh Jae-Sik)

Conflicting needs that stifle growth

By Nicholas Schoon

FORESTS ARE still neglected in wealthy, industrialised nations as well as developing countries, according to the World Wide Fund for Nature. And it picked out as an example recently the Glenfeshie estate, at the southern end of Scotland's Cairngorm mountains.

Glenfeshie — a 170 square kilometres estate — contains a remnant of the great Caledonian pine forest that once covered much of Scotland. But no young trees have been able to grow up for many decades because the big red deer population, kept high for the sake of stalking by wealthy human hunters, eat the seedlings and saplings. The woods that remain are full of elderly trees.

Glenfeshie was designated as a National Nature Reserve more than 30 years ago. But that has not stopped its wildlife value gradually declining because of what conservationists see as mismanagement under a series of private owners.

Three years ago a mysterious charitable trust, Will Woodlands, bought the estate off a Midlands furniture manufacturer for about £5 million with the stated aim of improving nature conservation.

The trust, set up by a now deceased widow in memory of her wealthy husband, planned to keep the deer out of the remaining woods using large fences, and continue to maintain high numbers for stalking. But deer fences are a known killer of the rare capercaillie and black grouse, birds which fly into them. And, outside the fences, the woods would still have been unable to spread and regenerate.

The trust applied for tree regeneration grants from the Government's Forestry Authority but was turned down. Conservation groups like WWF believe they played a major part in persuading the Forestry Authority to refuse these grants on the grounds that Will Woodland's plans did not give enough weight to regenerating forests and conserving natural species.

Now the trust has put Glenfeshie back on the market at £5 to £6 million. It may yet end up in the hands of owners mainly interested in running it as a sporting estate — in which case the forest and wildlife would be at risk of further decline.

Venezuelan bureaucracy thwarts development, drains money

By Bart Jones
Associated Press

CARACAS, Venezuela — Los Magallanes Public Hospital has one ambulance and 14 ambulance drivers. Six women take turns running the single elevator that works in the nine-story building.

Before it went bankrupt last February, state-run Viasa Airline had 12 airplanes and 291 pilots, or 24 pilots per plane.

At town hall in Caracas' Sucre municipality, 18 doormen checked in visitors at three doors. The mayor recently fired most of them, along with four gardeners at Perez De Leon Hospital, which has no garden.

Although Latin American governments are notoriously bloated and inefficient, Venezuela's is among the worst.

Its bureaucracy is siphoning economic development, scaring off foreign investors, stoking inflation and diverting funds needed for decaying highways, schools and hospitals, which lack supplies as basic as needles and bandages.

"It's a thousand-headed monster," says Luis Supelano of the planning ministry.

Like officials elsewhere in Latin America, Venezuelan government leaders are trying to tame their bureaucratic monster as part of free-market economic reforms that have swept the region.

So far, they've had little success.

"When I got here, I found people who were on the payroll and hadn't been seen in two or three years," says Delia da Silva, who took over the National Identification and Immigration Service in 1996.

The health ministry's headquarters in Caracas is bulging with 6,000 secretaries, messengers, administrators and other workers. An internal study concluded 75 per cent of them aren't needed.

On a typical day, many stroll in late, take a coffee-break and head out for a long lunch, often passing the afternoon browsing for clothes, makeup and other items offered by door-to-door salesmen, says Jose Siso, a health ministry official.

The 200 janitors and maintenance workers at Los Magallanes Hospital do so little the government hired private firms to mop floors and paint walls, says Hospital Director Dr. Jorge Weir.

Doormen often spend the night playing cards, placing horse bets and drinking rum, sometimes "wandering around drunk at 10 o'clock in the morning," says Dr. Emilia Colella, a kidney specialist.

Ambulance drivers drink on the job, too, she says, and sometimes zoom down the road with the siren blaring to go to the bank to cash their paychecks.

"There's no law. It's chaotic," says Colella.

The state payroll swelled during worldwide booms in the price of oil in the 1970s, when billions of dollars flowed into Venezuela. The no. 1 for-

Breast screening cuts cancer deaths by half — study

Based on the study's findings, the editorial, by Dr. Stephen Feig of the Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, U.S. says the death rate might have been reduced by 75 per cent if screening of women aged 40-49 was carried out annually rather than every 18 months.

A 10-year study of breast screening in women under 50 has found it almost halved the death rate from breast cancer. However, British experts tell Jeremy Laurance, Health Editor, that although breast screening is effective in younger women it should not be provided on the NHS.

REGULAR BREAST screening for early signs of cancer in women aged 39-49 does save lives, researchers have concluded. A study of 11,000 women who were screened every 18 months and 14,000 women who were not found a marked difference in deaths from breast cancer after 10 years.

About one in 28 women in both groups developed cancer but in the screened group 18 died compared with 40 deaths in the unscreened group. The difference, of 45 per cent, is probably attributable to earlier treatment of the screened group.

The study, conducted in Sweden and published in Cancer, will add to the controversy over breast screening in younger women which has been dismissed as ineffective. Experts have argued that the greater density of younger women's breasts makes it harder to detect the tiny calcified lumps that can signal the onset of cancer.

An editorial in the journal says this wrongly implies that there is a sudden change in women's breasts at age 50. "Many younger women have fatty breasts and many older women have denser breasts," it says. Improvements in mammographic techniques have made detection of cancer in women with denser breasts possible but no

long-term trials in younger women have been carried out. Based on the study's findings, the editorial, by Dr. Stephen Feig of the Jefferson Medical College, Philadelphia, U.S. says the death rate might have been reduced by 75 per cent if screening of women aged 40-49 was carried out annually rather than every 18 months.

Dr. Robin Wilson, clinical director of the breast service at Nottingham City Hospital, said the findings were "pretty impressive" but said the trial was too small to provide a definitive answer and there were questions about the cost and the risks to women of unnecessary investigations.

The NHS breast screening programme for women aged 50 to 64 is estimated to reduce deaths by one per cent at a cost of £35 million a year. In women, under 50, in whom breast cancer is less common, it has been estimated it would reduce deaths by 0.1 per cent making it 10 times more expensive. The Royal College of Radiologists says women under 50 could benefit from screening but it should not be a freely funded service.

Dr. Wilson said: "I don't think there is any doubt that screening done properly does reduce mortality in that age group (39-49). But is it something the NHS should pay for? The argument is you could save more lives by spending the money in other ways."

A trial of screening involving 195,000 women aged 40 to 41 in 30 centres around the country began in 1991 but it will be 15 years before the results are known because of the need for long-term follow-up of those who develop cancer. Dr. Wilson said it was imperative women under 50 offered screening were made aware of the risks. One in 10 women would be recalled for further tests subjecting them to anxiety and the possibility of a biopsy. Some would be falsely reassured because screening cannot detect all cancers. They must be warned to seek medical help should they notice a lump.

The Independent



ACI President Khaldoun Abu Hassan (second from right) addresses the seminar

Seminar examines energy rationalisation

AMMAN (Petra) — Royal Scientific Society (RSS) President Saeed Alloush Monday called for "rationalising the use of energy in order to achieve sustainable development."

Addressing a seminar on energy rationalisation, organised by the RSS in cooperation with Amman Chamber of Industry (ACI), the Higher Council of Science and Technology, the Industrial Development Bank and the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ), Dr. Alloush said: "We should deal with the three angles of sustainable development: Energy, water and the environment."

He added: "Any misuse of these dimensions would result in negative economic effects due to the unlimited consumption of traditional energy sources."

The president stressed Jordan's concern of using clean sources of energy, particularly those renewable ones. ACI President Khaldoun Abu Hassan said the industrial sector consumes 25 per cent of the total energy in the Kingdom and 34 per cent of the electric power.

He added that Jordan relies totally on imported sources of energy noting that such sources are of high cost to the Jordanian industry.

Riyadh forecasts \$4.8b budget deficit for 1998

RIYADH (AFP) — Saudi Arabia expects to run a budget deficit of 18 billion riyals (\$4.8 billion) in 1998, slightly higher than this year's. Information Minister Fuad Ben Abdel Salam Farsi said Monday.

The government planned expenditure of 196 billion riyals (\$52.2 billion) and expected receipts of 178 billion riyals (\$47.4 billion), the minister told the official news agency SPA.

The budget totals for the new financial year starting Jan. 1 were announced at the weekly cabinet meeting chaired by King Fahd.

The Saudi government expects this year's budget deficit to amount to 18 billion riyals (\$4.8 billion).

Higher than expected oil prices have filled the government's coffers with extra funds in 1997 for the second year running, but not enough to wipe out its budget deficit, bankers say.

Income is expected to rise further in 1998 following the decision of the 11-nation Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries earlier this month to increase Saudi Arabia's production quota by 760,000 barrels per day.

"Even if oil prices dipped by one to two dollars next

year because of higher production, the kingdom's revenues will still be high," a banker said.

With oil exports of around 6.5 million barrels per day (bpd), and petrochemical and other non-oil exports of four to six billion dollars, the government was forecast to earn as much as \$45 billion in 1997 compared with projected revenues of \$43.7 billion.

But the extra funds failed to eliminate the budget deficit, since part of the funds were used to replenish the country's international reserves, which had been eroded over the past decade because of the costs of the 1991 Gulf War and weak crude prices.

The budget deficit stood at 3.7 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1996 compared with 5.8 per cent in 1995 and more than 30 per cent in 1991.

The Saudi economy grew by 7.1 per cent in 1997 with GDP reaching \$145 billion.

King Fahd told the cabinet. He praised the good performance of the Saudi economy in which GDP grew by 7.1 per cent over the previous year to reach \$47 billion riyals (\$145 billion).

Crisis in Asia a double-edged sword for Israeli economy, economists say

TEL AVIV (R) — The economic crisis in South East Asia will have a strong impact on Israel's export-driven economy in 1998 — both for the good and the bad, economists say.

"Exports will grow less than we had expected because of the Asian crisis. This is the most important change that has happened in the last two months," said Ygal Sebban, chief econo-

mist at Koor Futures Markets. Mr. Sebban had been predicting Israeli exports would rise between 7.5 and 8.0 per cent in 1998 following an estimated seven per cent rise in 1997. He now expects exports to grow only 3.1 per cent as exports to Asia, which account for about 11 per cent of Israel's total, fall 10 per cent.

Mr. Sebban forecast that gross domestic product (GDP) in 1998 would expand by 2.5 per cent, down from an earlier estimate of 3.3 per cent. GDP in 1997 rose an estimated 2.0 per cent.

Victor Shohet, chief economist at Israel's Ofek Securities, is less pessimistic. Nevertheless, he believes export growth will suffer next year.

"The good news is inflation," said Jonathan Katz, chief economist at Solid Financial Markets.

Mr. Katz said the fundamentals — slower growth, a

housing glut, tight monetary and fiscal policy — all point to lower inflation. Throw in the Asian crisis, which is likely to result in cheaper prices for many imports, and inflation could fall even further, he said.

"I must more subscribe to the school of thought we may be seeing a significant drop in inflation — maybe down to 5.5, six per cent — even though we are forecasting around seven per cent," Mr. Katz added.

The government has set an inflation target next year of seven to 10 per cent. Most economists forecast consumer prices will rise around seven per cent in 1998 against an estimated eight per cent this year and 10.6 per cent in 1996.

With inflation on its way down, rising unemployment and the political pressure this entails may be the biggest problem facing Israel's economy next year.

"Unemployment is becoming a worrying problem, with growth under 3.5 per cent unemployment will rise. The population is growing by 2.5 per cent a year," said Mr.

Sebban, who estimates the jobless rate will reach 9.6 per cent by the end of 1998 against an average of 7.9 per cent this year.

Mr. Katz said the rise in unemployment was of a transitional nature as the Israeli economy shifted away from traditional industries such as textiles to high technology based industries.

Economists say the solution to the unemployment problem is for the government to step up investment, especially in infrastructure.

"Investment in infrastructure generates growth and growth generates work places," said Mr. Shohet, noting that the government's 1998 budget did not have a growth message.

In particular, the government should invest in roads and railways, facilitating travel for those living in development towns north and south of the greater Tel Aviv area where jobs are hard to come by.

The shut-down of textile factories has been prominently reported for weeks and dominated the attention of politicians.

Marriott Hotel hosts Saint Vincent De Paul Society (Mar Mansour)



AS PART of its charity activities during the Christmas celebrations season, the Marriott Hotel organised a luncheon banquet, prepared by the hotel's chef, for the children of the Saint Vincent De Paul Society (Mar Mansour) on Monday 22nd December 1997.

Everyone had a wonderful time and enjoyed the programme arranged by the hotel. The children were especially happy when Santa gave them their presents. Merry Christmas to one and all.

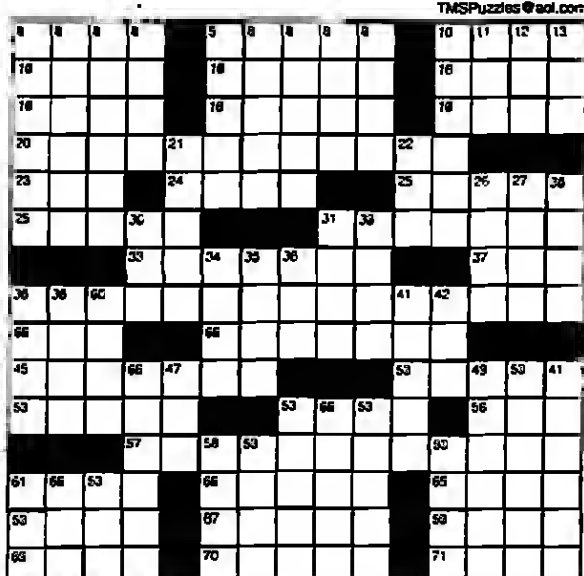
FOR RENT

Two-floor building. The first floor is a semi-villa with an area of 255 sq.m. Consists of 4 bedrooms (one master), 3 bathrooms, 3 verandas, living room, salon, dining room, JWC kitchen, garage, garden, central heating, intercom and independent water well. Location: Abdullah Ghoshieh Street, behind McDonald's, 20 metres opposite Unud Mosque and Ismat Pharmacy.

For information, please call 823771, 788336

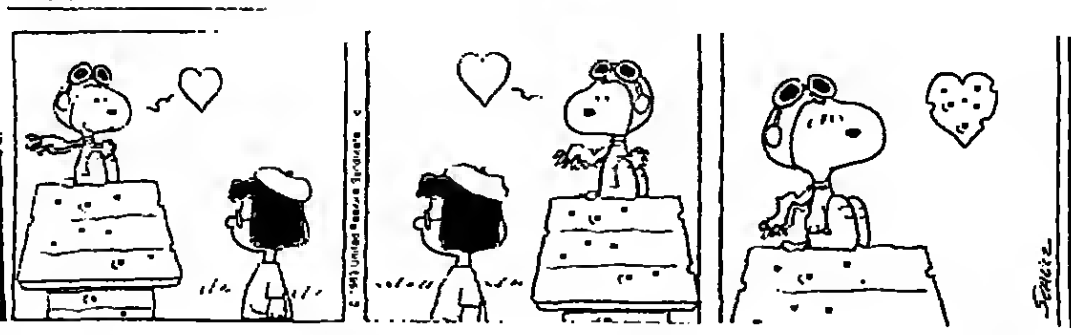
THE Daily Crossword Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

- ACROSS
- 1 Meat paste
 - 5 Rope on the range
 - 10 Brazilian sports legend
 - 14 Makes a mistake
 - 15 Iroquois tribe
 - 16 Stratford's river
 - 17 Idyllic meadows
 - 18 Bruce or Mansell
 - 19 Telephoned
 - 20 Hepburn Oscar winner of 1981
 - 23 ... chi chuan
 - 24 Hardships
 - 25 "The Prince of Tides" star
 - 29 Songwriters' grp.
 - 31 Unqualified
 - 33 Sister of Laertes
 - 37 ...'s name?
 - 38 Hepburn Oscar winner of 1958
 - 44 Make headway
 - 45 Demosthenes, Cicero, et al.
 - 48 Particulars
 - 52 Morise insert
 - 53 Hammerhead
 - 56 Infielder Ripken
 - 57 Hepburn Oscar winner of 1953
 - 61 Alf's last name
 - 64 Japanese car maker
 - 65 Writer Wiesel
 - 66 Modular component
 - 67 Chose
 - 68 Dimensions: Abbr.
 - 69 Western alliance, briefly
 - 70 Chicago tower
 - 71 Off, underling



- DOWN
- 1 Jai alai
 - 2 Sports venues
 - 3 Calamitous
 - 4 Exxon, formerly
 - 5 Team of tennis
 - 6 Prospero's servant
 - 7 Traffic advisories
 - 8 Leak slowly
 - 9 Norway's capital
 - 10 Absolution
 - 11 Gabor sister
 - 12 Actor Chaney
 - 13 Chang's twin
 - 21 "Adoration of the Magi" painter
 - 22 Compass dir.
 - 26 Stand up
 - 27 Quiz answer
 - 28 Ogler
 - 30 Abbreviation in merrily e-mail addresses
 - 31 ... colada
 - 32 Grassy expanse
 - 34 Rime
 - 35 Split hairs?
 - 36 Model/actress
 - 38 Lively pace
 - 39 Alternative to present
 - 40 Alaska's first governor
 - 41 Cake topping
 - 42 Profit
 - 43 Part of a BLT
 - 47 Performance artist of the 70s
 - 49 French schools
 - 50 Callas and
 - 51 Shriver
 - 52 Crafty to the max
 - 53 One of
 - 54 Columbus's ships
 - 55 Concluder
 - 56 Yikes
 - 58 Greek letters
 - 59 Stangy negative
 - 60 1964 British
 - 61 Open golf
 - 62 Champion
 - 63 Literary collection
 - 64 Took the bait

Peanuts



Andy Capp



Mutt'n Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, DECEMBER 30, 1997

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Better not argue with an authority figure. Instead, do what's required before this person even asks. You'll save everybody a lot of anguish and make an excellent impression besides. The older person will remember and appreciate what you've done. You might even get a promotion.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Start new businesses, launch new ideas, try new things. Trade school would be good. You learn quickly in a hands-on environment. You want to learn how to make what you want, and how to sell it. You cannot help but profit from this knowledge.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) It's a good time of year to review your insurance. How long has it been since you've done that? You might find you could get a cheaper rate somewhere else. Those guys are pretty competitive, you know. Before you waste any more money, call up somebody who knows and find out.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) Everything's on the other side of the chart from you today. This is not necessarily bad. Maybe you've simply learned to delegate. If that's not what's happening, you might start heading in that direction. You'll be surprised at how much you love it.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Think of this day as part of your exercise programme. You'll have to race around doing a zillion things. You won't have time to eat, so you'll be losing pounds before you even know it. This could be wonderful, if you look at it positively. Might as well. Same price.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You're so much in the mood to work, you hardly know when to stop. It looks like there's still paperwork that needs to go out. As far as the domestic scene goes, don't worry. You've got that handled. Now you just need to relax and enjoy the season.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Something you've wanted for a long time could finally happen this morning. It's a gift that's late in coming. This afternoon is excellent for romance. Old relationships will be even more romantic than new ones tonight. Build on the bond you've made.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You're learning quickly because it's easier for you to concentrate. And you're actually doing whatever it is that you're trying to master. You're a very tactile person. If you can see results tangibly, the information you're trying to learn will really sink in.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Figure out what you've accumulated over the last year, and what you've accomplished. If you're feeling like you haven't done enough, you're in for a surprise. Count the times you've made people laugh. Those are some of the most valuable moments you've spent.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Obstacles in your path are dissolving. That's unusual. You're used to them by now. Don't worry, your life will get continually better as you get older. Capricorns thrive in old age. And that will show up much sooner than you thought it would relax and enjoy the ride.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a day when you'll have to pay your dues, the piper and several debts, all at once. You're a very resourceful person. You'll think of something. As usual, you shouldn't face any sort of stressful situation all by yourself. Call up your friends and ask them for good ideas. Then ask a couple of them for a loan. This could work!

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Conditions are good for group activities. Meetings will go well. You'll be able to line up behind a major goal, and the rest will be easy. Are you planning on some sort of festivity or meal for people who don't have enough? If not, why not? It would be a lot of fun.

Birthstone of December: Turquoise — Zircon

THE BETTER HALF. By Glasbergen



"How was your day today, and how much was my fault?"

JUMBLE.

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

RODUG

HAGUL

REYAL

LYBBAF

Print answer here: A

Yesterday's

Jumbles: TARRY UNCLE BECAME AROUND

Answer: What the grocer got when he lowered the price on detergent — CLEANED OUT

Daily Business Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Agel, Azar see interest rates on deposits going down to 8%

AA A NUMBER of bankers expect further reduction in interest rates noting that share prices at the Amman Financial Market will be among the early beneficiaries from such a reduction. According to Mufleh Agel, executive director at the Arab Bank, the most important indication for the recent reduction on the rediscount and... repurchase rates is the Central Bank's affirmation of its intention to lower interest rates.

Mr. Agel said the market will gradually respond to the decline in interest rates. He indicated that a noticeable reduction will take place on the interest rates on deposits as they move towards eight per cent. There will be a drop in interest rates on loans parallel to the decline in the rates on deposits but that will be over a period ranging between one month and six months.

The senior Arab Bank official saw demand going up for loans and credit facilities as a result of lower rates. "That means a higher level of investment in the national economy and, consequently, greater production," he explained. He expected share prices to benefit somehow due to lower interest rates because the Amman Financial Market was among the first hurt when interest rates were hiked.

Jordan National Bank General Manager Wasef Azar described the recent cuts in the rediscount and repurchase rates as "a step in the right and logical path to encourage the investment process in Jordan and as the only way to get out from the economic recession." Mr. Azar saw the reduction as a continuation of the Central Bank policy that aims at enabling the investors and industrialists to use the funds available in-Jordan to develop and expand their activities.

Mr. Azar noted that the Central Bank's intention over the past six months was clear regarding lower interest rates on credit facilities while trying to maintain an advantage over the interest rates on the dollar. He expressed his conviction that the lower interest rate is in line with the Jordanian economic requirements.

The general manager said most banks are not giving more than eight per cent in interest even on large deposits. He indicated that interest on deposits has went down to as low as 7.5 per cent in some cases. "Some time may pass before the expiry of long-term deposits earning around 10 per cent and then clear signs will emerge showing lower interest on credit facilities," Mr. Azar concluded.

Asian financial crisis dulls sparkle on Israeli diamond sales

RAMAT GAN (AFP) — Asia's financial crisis has taken the sparkle off Israel's diamond exports and industry executives said Monday that 1998 would likely see a further drop in demand on one of their premier markets.

"Our exports hit a record \$4.1 billion this year, up from four billion last year, but we saw a dramatic fall in Asian orders during the second half," said Tzafir Anbar, director of the Ramat Gan diamond exchange outside Tel Aviv.

"In times of uncertainty, consumers start by giving up on luxuries like diamonds," Mr. Anbar told AFP. "We're expecting the slowdown in Asian demand to continue at least through the first half of 1998."

Exchange officials said

the drop in demand was worst in Japan, where diamonds had become a must purchase for the well-to-do in the early 1990s.

"After several years of steady growth, our sales to Japan in 1997 fell below \$500 million, compared to \$700 million the year before," said Yigal Heussman, president of the Israeli Diamond Industry Union.

Mr. Heussman said diamond sales to South Korea had also plummeted along with that country's financial markets and currency, falling to \$2.1 million dollars in November from \$3.1 million the same month in 1996.

With further turmoil on the horizon, Israeli diamond dealers have put several dozen million dollars worth of orders from South

Korea on hold due to fears the purchasers will not be able to pay their bills, he said.

Exports to Hong Kong, traditionally a redistribution center for diamonds destined for markets throughout southeast Asia, also fell to \$28 million in November, about half the figure for the same month in 1996.

For 1997, a more than 20 per cent jump in diamond exports to the United States made up for the slump in Asian demand. Mr. Anbar said total sales to the U.S. market should top two billion dollars this year, reaffirming North America's position as the top market for diamonds.

European sales have remained stable, he said.

Jordanian companies win more deals to sell to Iraq

AMMAN (Petra) — The U.N. Sanctions Committee has approved eight new contracts for Jordanian firms to sell products to Iraq under the U.N.-Iraq oil-for-food deal which allows Baghdad to sell \$2 billion worth of oil every six months to buy food and medicine.

The contracts for the eight firms are worth \$10,924,960, according to a responsible source at the Ministry of Industry and Trade. By including these eight contracts, Jordan's firms have raised the number and volume of deals

which won approval by the U.N. Sanctions Committee to 47 contracts together worth \$77 million.

The source said that the new contracts are for human medicine, veterinary medicines, school desks, plastic pipes and other commodities.

According to the source, the Jordanian mission to the U.N. is continuing its contacts to remove obstacles in the way of securing other contracts for the sale of Jordanian goods to Iraq.

Foreign investment in Asia to drop in 1998, says report

HONG KONG (AFP) — Foreign investment in Asia is likely to drop sharply next year, with the main focus of investment shifting toward acquisitions of local companies, a Hong Kong-based think tank said Wednesday.

At the same time, the huge size of China's domestic

market will enable it to continue to soak up the lion's portion of the investment, Political and Economic Risk Consultancy Ltd. (PERC) said in a report.

Greater China — which PERC defines as mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Singapore — is likely

to emerge as an even bigger sponge for foreign direct investment, the report said.

In 1996, mainland China absorbed 52 per cent of Asia's total foreign direct investment, or \$42.3 billion out of a total \$81.2 billion. China's own figures show that foreign direct investment

has fallen back sharply so far this year, the report said.

"To be sure, the absolute levels of such investment will fall both this year and in 1998. As a percentage of overall foreign direct investment to the region, however, its share is likely to rise," said the research group.

Greater China's absorption of so much of the region's foreign investment, at a time when Asian companies are scrambling for funds, may increase tensions in the future, PERC cautioned.

"This will create an even greater competitive challenge for the rest of Asia, and will help to ensure that the region starts off the next century much more Sino-focused than is currently the case," the report said.

The research group surveyed more than 400 expatriates in the region to ask how receptive they felt various Asian countries were to foreign investment.

Hong Kong, then Singapore, ranked as the most open to foreign investment, with the least restrictions or discrimination, while Vietnam ranked as the most hostile, followed by South Korea.

However, the amount of foreign direct investment did not correlate with the degree of openness to foreigners.

Instead, "foreign companies are not drawn to a particular country so much because of its open attitude toward foreign investment, as they are to the potential size of the market," the consultancy found.

China, for example, was on the low end of the openness scale, yet received by far the most investment.

The group predicted that lending to the region by foreign banks was certain to drop in the months ahead, as the risk of borrowers' defaulting is perceived as too great.

Instead, Asian companies will try to struggle out of debt by offering equity stakes to foreign investors, the group said. This will lead to a slew of mergers and acquisitions in Asia, with a gain in the amount of assets owned by foreigners, without much new inflow of capital.

South Korea is likely to experience the most social unrest as a result of its economic problems, the think tank said. It included the possibility of limited violence.

"The main focus of the protests will be the country's own political leaders and the controversial decisions they will have to make to cope with the realities of the deepening economic crisis," the report said.

REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	1.7856	0.5987	1.4475	129.35	1.4389	1782.26	2.0127	5.9758	
DE Mark	0.5597		0.3347	0.0098	72.69	0.8048	981.89	1.1288	3.3460
GB Sterling	1.6702	2.8896		2.4171	217.30	2.4033	2932.89	3.3639	3.9820
CH Franc	0.6808	123.33	0.4131		88.76	0.9834	1212.57	138.07	4.1256
JP Yen	0.0077	1.3737	0.4601	1.1130		1.1064	13.50	154.85	4.8950
CA Dollar	0.6950	1.2391	0.4147	1.0022	1.11		1217.26	1.3959	4.1427
IT Lira	0.0006	0.1067	0.3405	0.0824	1353.00	0.8189		11.46	3.4008
NL Guilder	0.4968	88.68	0.2870	71.87	64.48	0.7142	871.40		2.9650
FR Franc	0.1673	0.2986	0.1000	24.1923	21.72	0.2406	33.66	33.6600	

Middle Eastern Currencies									
Currency	USD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LEB	EGP	
US Dollar	0.7090	3.7505	0.3770	3.6400	0.3044	3.6724	1622.00	3.3970	
Jordan Dinar	1.4104		6.2898	0.5319	5.1340	0.4293	5.1797	2145.69	4.7912
Saudi Riyal	0.2666		0.1890	0.1006	0.97	0.0812	0.98	406.81	0.5057
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9477		8.65	0.8074	9.74	4036.92	3.0101
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0304		1.06	0.0836	1.01	418.13	0.5332
Kuwait Dinar	3.2852	2.3292	12.3210	1.2386	11.96		12.06	5000.00	0.5332
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1931	1.0213	0.1027	0.9912	0.0829		414.44	0.9250
Lebanese/1000	0.66	0.4658	2.4642	0.2477	2.3918	0.2000	2.4129		2.2319
Egyptian	0.2944	0.2087	1.1041	0.1110	1.0715	0.0895	1.0811	448.05	

Mid-East Currencies									
Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY				
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4768	0.15964	0.38622	34.6763				
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.49678	0.16304	0.39443	35.4133				
KW Dinar	3.2852	5.87199	1.96696	4.79364	427.168				
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.74158	1.68808	3.94172	344.947				
CY Pound	1.9032	3.4017	1.1933	2.756	247.425				

Currency Deposit Rates (Bid)									
Period	1-M	3-M	6-M	9-M	1-Y				
USD	5.70	5.70	5.70	5.70	5.75				
GBP	7.38	7.46	7.53	7.56	7.50				
JPY	0.26	0.38	0.32	0.34	0.26				
DEM	3.45	3.64	3.67	3.75	3.83				
FRF	3.50	3.59	3.70	3.77	3.86				
CHF	1.32	1.47	1.67	1.82	1.75				
ITL	6.02	5.86	5.79	5.08	5.08				

JOD Cross Rates									
Currency	Buy	Sell							
US Dollar	0.708	0.710							
GB Sterling	1.187	1.1929							
DE Mark	0.3993	0.4013							
CH Franc	0.4841	0.4896							
FR Franc	0.1193	0.1199							
JP Yen	0.5438	0.5463							
NL Guilder	0.3543	0.3561							
IT Lira	0.4089	0.4089							

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET															
HOUSING BANK CENTER AMMAN - SHARISANI															
TELEPHONE: 607171 / 607179															
ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 29/12/1997															
PAST 13 MONTHS		COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE					
	HIGH	LOW													
	346,000	249,000	ARAB BANK	15.0	1.23	4	80	36000	324.00	326.00	2.00+				
N	2,340	1,680	JOR. NATIONAL BK.	8	0.00	20	97000	172659	1.77	1.77	-				
S	5,800	2,400	CAIRO ARABIAN BANK	7.5	0.11	1	250	913	3.50	3.65	15+				
S	3,600	1,780	BANK OF JORDAN	5.8	0.00	8	6639	11174	1.76	1.85	09+				
I	1,250	890	MID. EAST INV. BK.	85.4	0.00	1	350	325	1.25	1.30	05+				
S	2,680	1,700	INDUSTRIAL DEV. BK.	10.2	0.11	7	6750	11520	1.71	1.70	01-				
S	5,300	4,000	THE HOUSING BK.	15.3	3.78	4	235	1145	5.13	5.13	01+				
S	4,180	1,850	JOR. KUWAIT BANK	11.1	0.00	8	2102	4283	1.99	2.09	10+				
S	4,980	620	JOR. GULF BANK	3.9	16.77	1	2250	1463	66	65	01-				
S	4,050	2,380	JOR. ISLAMIC BANK	12.1	4.03	8	14548	3512	2.38	2.44	06+				
S	1,530	1,080	UNION BK. SAV. INV.	P	0.00	1	500	545	1.10	1.09	01-				
S	4,990	2,500	ARAB BANKING CO.	22.4	0.00	2	300	609	2.95	3.10	15+				
BANK SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 232.99	CHG: +0.62	77	130894	365949
S	1,740	900	ARABIAN SEAS INSUR.	8.7	0.00	1	250	238	90	95	05+				
S	4,250	3,800	JEPUSALEM	10.9	5.00	1	3000	12000	3.90	4.00	10+				
S	6,170	3,150	ALMUSAL AL-ARABI	17.7	0.00	3	1750	6563	3.57	3.75	18+				
INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 120.58	CHG: +1.35	5	5000	18800
I	3,050	2,550	JOR. ELECTRIC PWR.	9.2	5.18	11	4675	9000	1.92	1.93	01+				
I	8,450	7,900	JOR. HOTEL TOURISM	12.5	2.25	3	250	5730	8.40	8.60	40+				
I	3,410	2,450	HIMES MINERALS	18.0	4.38	1	100	356	3.39	3.56	17+				
S	7,500	3,750	VEHICLES OWNERS FED.	11.1	3.47	1	200	1008	4.80	5.04	24+				
S	6,100	3,550	ARAB INTL. HOTELS	16.0	3.85	6	5150	26625	4.95	5.30	25+				
I	1,550	830	HAT. PORTFOLIO	9	0.00	5	101350	101350	1.05	1.03	02-				
I	1,010	850	REAL ESTATE INV.	14.8	5.61	1	350	268	1.02	1.07	05+				
+	7,600	4,700	JORDAN INTL. TRAD.	23.4	0.00	2	500	230	47	46	01-				
I	1,680	1,150	MID. EAST HOTELS	19.7	0.00	6	3250	2838	1.36	1.29	03+				
I	2,000	2,800	ARAB INTL. DEV. FIDUC.	9	0.00	8	2275	8856	3.39	3.48	09+				
I	1,050	740	JORDAN EXPAT. INV.	9	0.00	1	250	350	95	1.00	05+				
I	2,230	1,630	UNITED CO.	8.0	6.51	3	500	848	1.69	1.69	-				
I	890	640	UNION LANG DEV.	9	0.00	2	1500	1055	70	71	01+				
SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 117.77	CHG: +1.37	47	119650	158452
I	1,160	930	ATTANQUEZ	9	0.00	1	3000	3480	1.16	1.16	-				
I	4,450	2,750	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	20.2	3.67	34	9433	28291	3.00	3.00	-				
I	4,140	3,050	JOR. PHOSPHATE MINES	10.8	2.56	24	10450	39269	3.72	3.91	19+				
I	11,160	9,200	JOR. PETROL REFINERY	11.8	8.51	4	240	2508	10.50	10.45	05+				
I	1,410	1,000	MOON INDUSTRIES	10.1	2.52	1	856	1014	1.15	1.21	06+				
I	7,000	5,800	JOR. WORSTED MILLS	11.8	4.74	4	7950	5748	7.00	7.35	35+				
I	4,700	3,400	ARAB PHARM. MANUF.	11.6	4.76	8	3200	13448	4.22	4.20	03+				
I	1,650	1,000	JOR. PYRES INTL.	10.0	2.67	5	2050	2675	1.34	1.28	05+				
I	2,800	1,800	GENERAL MINING	9	0.00	2	1500	3315	2.55	2.24	01-				
I	8,400	5,000	ARAB CHEM. DISTRCN.	24.9	3.69	3	250	2033	7.76	8.13	37+				
I	6,800	4,400	QAD ALDAMA IND.	39.0	3.70	4	300	2990	5.70	5.70	02+				
I	650	450	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	9.3	0.00	11	9500	4255	45	44	02-				
I	1,270	700	NATIONAL STEEL INTL.	9	0.00	2	500	105	70	70	02-				
I	730	510	RATIONAL INDS.	9	0.00	30	5650	3186	58	56	02-				
I	150	400	INTERMED. PETRO. CHEM.	9	0.00	4	850	4	32	40	01-				
I	5,290	4,370	JOR. CHEM. INDS.	23.8	3.43	2	500	2915	5.55	5.83	38+				
I	840	530	JOR. ROCKWOOL YNOS.	9	0.00	2	1000	580	55	58	03+				
I	2,930	1,380	UNIV. CHEM. INDS.	15.1	5.95	1	350	880	1.60	1.68	08+				
I	4,610	2,700	ALADDIN CO.	26.4	2.54	4	1300	7245	3.00	3.15	15+				
S	3,000	1,160	NATL. CABLE WIRE. HFAC	29.9	0.00	3	1050	1432	1.31	1.24	07+				
I	890	530	JOR. SULPHO-CHEM.	16.7	6.09	5	1000	5648	5.7	5.8	01+				
I	1,610	1,140	ARAB PHARM. CHEM.	19.7	6.09	5	1000	1156	1.18	1.21	03+				
I	1,130	590	KAWTHEER INVEST.	60.1	0.00	1	500	395	58	61	03+				
I	1,600	820	UNIV. MOON INDS.	P	26	14	3890	3892	83	83	-				
I	1,410	690	JOR. INDS. PROPERTIES	10.0	12.50	12	1500	12195	78	76	04-				
I	970	810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	16.5	0.00	9	6950	6205	89	90	01+				
I	1,970	1,340	EL -RAY REPAIR WEAR	45.0	0.00	13	48900	68185	1.49	1.43	07+				
I	1,330	1,080	NATL. TOBACCO	16.5	2	2100	2	2500	1.19	1.19	01-				
I	1,200	860	UNION CH. & VEG.	45.9	0.00	2	500	595	1.01	1.01	01+				
I	810	710	JORDAN STEEL	33.0	6.85	3	600	441	74	73	01-				
I	840	570	MID. EAST COMPLEX	7.4	16.67	11	73250	45308	60	60	-				
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS											INDEX: 116.53	CHG: +0.66	212	223896	324701
GRAND TOTAL											INDEX: 170.09	CHG: +0.69	341	479440	767901
PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 29/12/1997															
	540	300	CENTRAL GEN. STORAGE	9	0.00	3	3000	989	34	33	01-				
	620	340	JOR. TRADE FAC.	9.6	0.00	32	135850	48856	35	36	01+				
	1,550	1,060	DARA FOR INVESTMENT	25.3	2	1000	2	1090	1.24	1.20	06+				
	800	460	UNION INV. FID	9	0.00	10	51000	10200	71	70	01-				
	570	360	ARAB FIN. INVEST.	9	0.00	3	2250	1035	45	46	01+				
N	2,220	1,050	CENTURY INV. GROUP	8	0.00	2	100000	204000	2.78	2.04	02+				
N	1,000	1,000	ARAB INTL. INV. & MOTELS	2	0.00	2	20000	20000	2.00	2.00	01+				
	350	140	JOR. INDS. MATCH-JENCO	9	0.00	2	1350	213	17	17	-				
	650	440	ARAB FOOD & HSG.	9	0.00	8	10700	4844	46	45	01-				
	1,200	280	ARAB INTL. INV. FID.	36.4	0.00	2	2400	986	78	78	01+				
	580	310	NATL. TEXTILE	9	0.00	2	1250	375	31	30	01-				
	750	300	NATL. MULT. ENG. HANICO	9	0.00	34	67450	31284	47	48	01+				
	640	360	NATL. GAS OIL & MOTELS	9	0.00	2	750	80	36	36	-				
	520	400	ARAB ELECT. INDS.	9	0.00	1	500	220	42	44	02+				
	660	580	MID-EAST PHARM. 751	9	0.00	5	3850	1540	65	65	-				
	730	550	RAJ PHARM.	9	0.00	2	1000	1177	73	73	01+				
	470	280	INDS. ENG.	9	0.00	7	3700	1036	29	28	01-				

World Cup cities selected, door still open for Pyongyang

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea said Monday it had picked 10 cities to host the 2002 World Cup finals which it will share with Japan, but that the door remained open for North Korea to hold some matches.

"We had invited North Korea to participate with us in the World Cup, but we have not yet received anything official from them. And so we can't unilaterally include them," said a statement by the 2002 World Cup Committee in Seoul.

But if North Korea decides to participate, then "we can at least let them stage one match," it said.

In a dramatic change in FIFA's position, president Joao Havelange said last month he would try to visit North Korea next year to offer the Stalinist country stage the chance to hold some matches.

Havelange also promised to invite North Korean leader Kim Jong-il and the next South Korean president to next

year's World Cup opening ceremonies in France.

But FIFA has not yet had a reply from Pyongyang. FIFA had earlier said it would be difficult to allow games in North Korea before the unification of the Korean peninsula.

South Korea's Football Association president Chung Mong-Joon, however, has pushed North Korea's possible participation since South Korea and Japan were named last year to hold the first-ever co-hosted World Cup.

The 2002 World Cup Committee said it had chosen Seoul, Pusan, Taegu, Kwangju, Ulsan, Taejeon, Incheon, Suwon, Chonju and Sogwipo in Cheju Island.

The committee said bad yet to make a final decision on Seoul, which had not yet submitted its stadium facility construction plans. Japan will host half the matches.

Maier wins World Cup downhill

BORMIO, Italy (AFP) — In-form Austrian Hermann Maier won Monday's World Cup men's downhill race at this Italian resort.

It was Maier's first downhill triumph and he led an Austrian sweep of the first four places.

The 25-year-old former bricklayer scored his third World Cup victory of the season, clocking 2min 01.59sec to increase his lead in the overall standings. Andreas Schifferer was second, 3/100ths of a second back, and Werner Franz third, at 2:01.79. Stefan Eberharter — was fourth, ahead of Norwegian Lasse Kjus.

The Austrians have dominated the early season alpine events leading into the Nagano Olympics in February and filled seven of the first 10 places on a tight, twisting, technical Stelvio course.

Maier, who also has Super-G and giant slalom wins to his credit this season, is fast emerging as a great all-rounder.

"I'm surprised I won today," said Maier. "My tactics were to take it easy today and then go for it tomorrow."

Maier said he had come close to skipping Bormio to concentrate on his favoured slalom and super-g events in the new year.

Frenchman Benjamin Melquiond, meanwhile, suffered head, neck and shoulder injuries in a frightening high-speed crash during what was the third of the season's 11 World Cup downhill.

Racing was held up while 22-year-old Melquiond was treated on course before being taken away for treatment. The race was the first World Cup downhill since Dec 5 — when Maier finished second behind Schifferer — and will be followed by a second downhill at Bormio on Tuesday.



Michael Jordan

Jordan branded for excellence

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Michael Jordan has already made his name into a synonym for greatness. In 1997, he stepped up his bid to transform himself into a brand name for excellence.

Facing what may well be his last National Basketball Association season, he laid the groundwork for his post-NBA life when he launched Michael Jordan Inc., an off-spring of his sponsor Nike that will produce his signature Jordan line of basketball apparel.

"I'm sure everybody pretty much knows that at some point I'm going to have to stop playing basketball," Jordan said at the launch in September. This gives me a great avenue for a new challenge.

"The appetite to create is an unbelievable ambition. It started with my basketball skills. I've been able to create on the basketball court and I hope to take that over to business."

To be sure, Jordan has one basketball goal left — a sixth NBA title with the Chicago Bulls.

That quest got off to a rocky start this season after Bulls co-star Scottie Pippen had foot surgery from which he still had not returned in early December.

But the fact that Pippen and Bulls coach Phil Jackson were still teamed up with Jordan at all was a testament to the power Jordan wields off the court as well as on.

Bulls owner Jerry

Reinsdorf and vice president Jerry Krause wanted to begin dismantling their aging team after they won their fifth title with a victory over the Utah Jazz in the NBA Finals in June.

Jordan, who played the 1996-97 season on a one-year contract, quietly made

guard Hersey Hawkins said. "Like this year, he's definitely taking advantage of that new rule where you can't touch anybody on defence. He's posting up a lot more than he did in the past, so when he catches it in the post, he faces up, because you can't touch

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it clear that if Pippen and Jackson didn't return, neither would he.

"We're entitled to defend what we have until we lose it," Jordan said. "Phil should be the head coach, and I shouldn't have to make the decision to play for another coach. Simple as that."

And it was, despite the fears of Krause and Reinsdorf that by sticking with their dynasty they will follow in the footsteps of the Boston Celtics, who stuck by their aging stars to the bitter end and haven't reached the NBA finals since 1987.

The Bulls, with Pippen sidelined by foot surgery for the first two months of the season, are struggling. But even rivals eager to find a chink in Chicago's armor say that Jordan remains a formidable opponent.

"The amazing thing about it is, even though he's getting older he seems to come up with something that's a little different, that seems to give him the edge," Seattle

him, and he shoots over you."

Hawkins said he will look back on his battles with Jordan knowing that he played the best ever.

"And what's funny about it is, even my kids know he's the greatest ever. Hawkins said, "They don't come to the games to see Daddy play when we play them. They come to see Michael."

The challenge facing the NBA after the charismatic Jordan departs is clear. But Jordan will face his own difficulties redefining himself in the cutthroat world of sports apparel manufacturing and marketing.

His performances on court fueled the meteoric rise in the popularity of Nike shoes. Once he turns full-time to running Michael Jordan Inc., his own best advertisement will no longer be visible.

"The challenge is to create something that fans and public can continue to identify with," Jordan said. "I look forward to that a lot."

Brindabella wins Sydney to Hobart race

HOBART (AFP) —

Australian maxi Brindabella beat Hong Kong pocket maxi Exile Monday in a thrilling finish to the Sydney-Hobart yacht race.

The two had been neck-and-neck across the Bass Strait and down Tasmania's east coast, but spent a nervous few hours on the Derwent River in fickle breezes before the powerful maxi owned and skippered by George Snow slipped over the line first.

Brindabella's crew celebrated with champagne amid a chorus of wailing horns from the spectator fleet which accompanied it down the Derwent.

Brindabella finished in two days 23hrs 37min and 12sec, well outside the record of two days 14hrs 7min and 10sec set by Germany's Morning Glory last year.

Warwick Miller's 66-footer Exile came in 9min 30sec later, well-placed to take handicap honours in the classic. It also came second last year, to Morning Glory.

Brindabella's victory was a sweet one for owner-skipper George Snow, who has won every major Australian yachting race except the Sydney to Hobart, where he has twice been runner-up to overseas maxis and twice forced to withdraw.

"This year I think was the year we were determined to get it right and we did," Snow said. "There was a great battle with (Exile) and they will probably get handicap, so that's something for them," he said, adding that only in the last five minutes did he feel the race was in the bag. Miller said he never expected to beat Brindabella and overall handicap honours were his main target. He must now wait to see if he holds his position at the top of the list.

While the champagne went to Snow's Brindabella, the bulk of the admiration went to Miller, who had pushed the maxi all the way to the line.

"It's the greatest blue water classic in the world ... and this was my toughest," said Miller, who was sailing his sixth Sydney-Hobart.

Miller, an Australian who divides his time between Sydney and his Hong Kong business, was racing Exile as part of the Chinese Southern Cross Cup team.

The pocket maxi went well partly because of the conditions and partly because of the different course it set earlier in the race, he said.

"In flatter water George beats us very easily ... But I don't think George's boat handles lumps very well," he said.

On the treacherous Bass Strait Friday night, the sea defeated even the hardened sailors among his crew.

"I never get sick, but I was sick," he said.

Miller said the Sydney-Hobart was the greatest "because it throws everything at you". But he would not be back next year, he said.

"But I said that last year," he added, after a pause.



U.S. Olympic champion backstroke swimmer Brad Bridgewater practices his starts at the Wollongong University pool December 29. Bridgewater is training with fellow U.S. team members in preparation for the World Swimming Championships to be held in Perth in January 1998 (Reuters photo)

China's new stars on a mission to defend national honour

HONG KONG (AFP) — Chen Yan? Jiang who? Out of the blue, China, "bitter" at its treatment by other nations, has unleashed a new generation of sports stars on what is looking increasingly like a revenge mission. Dozens of records in swimming, athletics, weightlifting and other sports, plus a national games staged with the grandeur of an Olympics, set the world talking about Chinese sport — and Chen Yan and Jiang Bo in particular.

Sixteen-year-old Chen came from nowhere to break a 15-year-old world record when she swam the 400m individual medley in 4min 34.79sec at the national games in Shanghai. Wu Yanyan, equally unknown, set a women's 200m individual medley world record of 2:09.72.

Jiang, the new teenage running sensation of supercoach Ma Junren, smashed the women's world 5,000m record twice in two days, roared on by 80,000 people in the Shanghai Barren stadium. Fellow teenager Dong Yanmei also broke the old record.

China has again become the world's best at badminton, brought on stream new table tennis champions and was even tipped as a future rugby union power after joining the International Rugby Board.

But to the anger of Chinese athletes and their cadres, too much of the talk is again of drugs, secrecy and conspiracy.

Chinese women, revelations at the Rome world swimming championships in 1994, go into the world championships in Perth in January holding five of the 10 fastest times of 1997 in six of the 13 individual Olympic events.

But the reaction of rival swimming powers has been disbeliever.

Many openly say China has not learned the lesson from seeing seven swimmers, including two world champions, fail drug tests at the 1994 Asian Games in Japan.

U.S. swimming president Carol Zaleski said she was "shocked" at China's times. The U.S. body offered to pay for random tests on all Chinese swimmers taking part in Perth. Australian swimming coach Don Talbot joined the accusations.

But Chinese sports leaders insist their country has one of the toughest anti-drug regimes in the world. Chinese Swimming Association president Guo Qinglong said the drug stories were "fabricated rumours."

"Around 500 of our swimmers undertook random tests at training camps around the country and the number of positive tests in China was lower than anywhere else," said Yuan Weimin, one of the senior organisers of the Shanghai games.

Sports chiefs point to the fact that more than 7,000 swimming pools have been built around the country in the past two years and around 10,000 children are undergoing what

Guo calls "systematic training" as potential stars of the future.

China is just as defensive over whether it will make a new attempt to host the Olympics, with the 2008 event the next to be decided and several Chinese cities — including Shanghai and Hong Kong — known to be keen on a share.

International Olympic Committee president Juan Antonio Samaranch publicly urged China to put itself forward. But the Chinese Olympic Committee (COC) is reluctant after the humiliating way it lost to Sydney for the 2000 Games.

Amidst continuing Chinese accusations that "political factors" decided the 2000 bid, COC secretary general Tu Mingde said China endured "a very bitter lesson" in the attempt.

"China will definitely, I think sometime in the future, host an Olympic Games," he said, before adding, "the timing of a bid is very important and also very sensitive."

Nearly every Chinese coach, from Ma Junren to national swimming coach Zhang Xiong now insist their proteges will peak for the Asian Games in 1998 and more importantly Sydney 2000.

Ma says his runners are on target to "produce miracles" at the next Olympics. Wang Junxia, women's 5,000m Olympic champion and 10,000m world record holder, is back out of retirement and aiming for Sydney.

And that worries Australia which is spending heavily on its own programme to prepare winners. "There is a lot of talk in international sporting circles that China is aiming to get its own back for losing the 2000 Games," said one Asian sports leader.

But China is investing across the sporting spectrum.

The state sporting machine has packed off tennis players to the Nick Bollettieri Tennis Academy in Florida and footballers to learn the "beautiful game" in Brazil, though the national team made a public apology to the nation after failing to reach the World Cup finals.

The women weightlifters broke around 20 world records at the world championships in Thailand this month, but they also have a drug shadow hanging over them after three disqualifications at the national games.

No-one can doubt China's domination of table tennis after virtually sweeping the titles at the world championships and are again on a par with Indonesia in badminton after winning the Sudirman Cup mixed team world title.

China has made inroads into rowing world titles and is confidently putting teenagers through punishing triathlon training routines, having declared the aim is Sydney in two years. The world has been warned.

TODAY AT	CINEMA TEL: 631144	CINEMA TEL: 634144	CINEMA TEL: 600238	CINEMA TEL: 677420	CINEMA TEL: 679130	CINEMA TEL: 679130	Hisham Yanes Theatre TEL: 625155
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	THE PEACEMAKER	ANOTHER 9-1/2 WEEKS	AL MASEER (Arabic) Nour Al Sharif Shows: 8:30, 10:45	CONCORD "2" MURDER 1600 Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	GEORGE OF THE JUNGLE	AIR FORCE ONE	THE GOVERNMENT IN THE SERVICE OF PEOPLE
	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	HERCULES Shows: 11:00, 5:00		Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30	Shows: 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:45	Starring Hisham Yanes and Amal Dabbas
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Sports

Timberwolves defeat Pistons; Spurs lose

AUBURN HILLS, MICHIGAN (AP) — Stephen Marbury scored 10 of his team-high 19 points in the fourth quarter to lead the Minnesota Timberwolves to a 93-89 comeback victory over the Detroit Pistons on Sunday night.

The win, Minnesota's first in Detroit since 1992, was the Wolves' sixth in eight games and moved them to .500 (14-14) for the first time since they were 6-6. Detroit has now lost two straight, both at home.

Tom Gugliotta had 15 points and 13 rebounds for Minnesota, while Grant Hill led all scorers with 27 points. Brian Williams added 19 points and 16 rebounds for the Pistons.

Miami Heat 101, Indiana Pacers 90: In Miami, Alonzo Mourning scored 22 points and grabbed 13 rebounds and Tim Hardaway had 21 points and 10 assists as Miami beat Indiana.

In a matchup of two of the top teams in the Eastern Conference, Miami outscored Indiana 8-1 in the final 1:57 to secure its fourth win in five games.

Both teams entered with 18-9 records, and Miami spoiled the Pacers' bid to post their best start after 28 games since joining the National Basketball Association. Miami had lost its two previous meetings with Indiana this season.

Utah Jazz 89, Vancouver Grizzlies 88: In Vancouver, British Columbia, John Stockton scored 10 of his 20 points in the fourth quarter, including a wide-open jumper with 2.3 seconds left that gave Utah the win.

After squandering a 4-point, third-quarter lead and falling behind by one point twice in the final 38 seconds, the Jazz managed to pull out the win when Karl Malone set a pick on Antonio Daniels that freed Stockton at the top of the key.

The Grizzlies then blew an opportunity to pull out the victory when Daniels' inbound attempt was picked off by Jeff Hornacek.

Karl Malone led the Jazz with 31 points, breaking the 20-point mark for the 28th time in 29 games, and added a game-high 13 rebounds.

Seattle SuperSonics 106, Phoenix Suns 97: In Phoenix, Gary Payton had 24 points, 10 assists and six rebounds as Seattle improved its NBA-best road record to 11-4.

Detlef Schrempf added 25 points and nine rebounds for Seattle, which won despite being out-rebounded 47-30.

Rex Chapman led Phoenix, which had its four-game winning streak snapped, with 26 points. The Suns lost both Danny Manning and Jason Kidd to injuries.

Manning strained an abdominal muscle late in the first quarter and Kidd rolled his right ankle with 5:44 remaining in the game.

Sacramento Kings 92, Philadelphia 76ers 90: In Sacramento, California, Derrick Coleman and Corliss Williamson got into a fight and Mitch Richmond scored 29 points as Sacramento edged Philadelphia.

With 6:02 remaining in the fourth quarter, an battle under the boards turned into a fight in which Coleman and Williamson both landed punches. The brawl reached the scorer's table, and both players were pulled to the floor and separated.

Aaron McKie of the Sixers got off a shot just before the buzzer, but it was an air-ball.

Boston Celtics 108, Los Angeles Lakers 102: In the Los Angeles suburb of Inglewood, Antoine Walker had 28 points and 13 rebounds and Travis Knight burned his former team by scoring 11 of his 14 points in the second half as Boston stunned Los Angeles.

It was just the second home loss of the season for the Lakers, who had their four-game winning streak snapped and fell one game behind first-place Seattle in the Pacific Division.

Rick Fox led Los Angeles with 27 points and nine rebounds. Elden Campbell had 18 points and nine rebounds. Van Exel had 17 points and 10 assists and Kobe Bryant also had 17 points for the Lakers.

Portland Trail Blazers 82, San Antonio Spurs 79: Portland came back from a miserable start and rallied in the second half behind Rasheed Wallace to snap San Antonio's seven-game winning streak at home in Portland, Oregon.

It was the Blazers' second victory over a Midwest Division power in as many days. They beat Utah in Salt Lake City 102-91 Saturday.

Patriots rip Dolphins in NFL playoffs

FOXBORO (AFP) — New England's defence overpowered Miami, with interceptions producing one touchdown and setting up another in a 17-3 victory Sunday in the American football playoffs.

The first-round National Football League victory decided next week's NFL quarter-final pairings in the American Conference, with New England going to Pittsburgh and Denver visiting Kansas City.

"Pittsburgh is a championship team. We will have our hands full," said New England coach Pete Carroll, whose club lost 24-21 to the Steelers here in the regular season.

Todd Collins returned an intercepted pass 40 yards for a touchdown to give the Patriots a 14-0 lead early in the second half. Chris Slade had picked off a first-half pass to set up the first Patriot touchdown.

"The defence made big plays all day," Collins said. "Our guys are stepping up and making the plays."

New England's defence allowed Miami quarterback Dan Marino to complete only 17 of 43 passes for 141 yards and denied him a touchdown throw for the first time in his past 14 playoff appearances.

"This is about as good as you want your defense to play," Carroll said. "We were fortunate we could continue to pressure. We just stayed with the game plan."

Slade intercepted a deflected Marino pass and returned the ball 20 yards to set up a 24-yard touchdown pass three plays later from Drew Bledsoe to Troy Brown.

Ex-Dolphin Keith Byars had helped prepare his Patriot teammates for Marino's signals, helping New England defenders know what was coming.

"Everything helps. That can attribute to us making some of the plays," Collins said. "My play was a slant pass. You get lucky. You get in the throwing lane and he throws it. You just catch it."

The Patriots, Super Bowl losers to Green Bay last January, beat Miami 14-12 last Monday in the NFL regular-season finale to claim home-field advantage in the playoff rematch.

The Dolphins have lost seven consecutive playoff games on opponents' fields, not winning one since 1972.

"This team needs some changes," a frustrated Miami coach Jimmy Johnson said.

The defeat also snapped a six-game playoff win streak for Johnson, who lost in Dolphin playoff debut after having guided Dallas to two Super Bowl titles.

New England rushed extra defenders at Marino 23 times, showing little regard for the NFL's worst rushing attack and shutting down the Dolphins' passing game.

Adam Vinatieri's 22-yard field goal gave New England a 17-0 lead. The only Miami points came on Olindo Mare's 38-yard field goal on the second play of the fourth quarter.

The Dolphins then recovered an onside kick. But New England recovered a fumble on the next play and Miami never threatened again.

"We didn't have anything offensively," Marino said.

Vinatieri, who failed on only four field goal attempts all season, missed two in the second quarter, pushing a 48-yard boot wide left and sending a 47-yarder wide right 30 seconds before half-time.

Buccaneers sail past Lions

TAMPA (AFP) — Tampa Bay's defence shut down American football rushing champion Barry Sanders and the Buccaneers beat Detroit 20-10, taking their first American football playoff triumph since 1979.

The victory here Sunday sends Tampa Bay to Green Bay next Sunday to meet the reigning Super Bowl champions in a National Football League quarter-final.

"We have to come up with a way to beat them," Tampa Bay coach Tony Dungy said. "Playing there is tough but we have a lot of energy."

Minnesota visits San Francisco next Saturday in the other National Conference matchup. That winner will face the Packers-Buccaneers winner on January 11 for a Super Bowl berth.

The Packers beat the Bucs twice in the regular season, 21-16 at Green Bay and 17-6 in Tampa.

"The one thing you can't defence against is being physically tough," Tampa Bay quarterback Trent Diller said of the Packers. "If we match their physicality and emotion, we can beat them."

The Buccaneers, hosting their first playoff game in 17 years, allowed Sanders only 65 yards total and just 15 in the first half, during which Tampa Bay amassed a 13-0 lead.

"Our defence did a great job hustling," Dungy said. "We knew how tough Barry was going to be."

Bucs' quarterback Trent Diller completed 13 of 26 passes for 181 yards and directed



Tampa Bay Buccaneers receiver Riedel Anthony (85) gathers in a pass from quarterback Trent Diller as Detroit Lions defenders including Mark Carrier (R) move in during first-half NFC wildcard playoff action. The game was played in Tampa's Houlihan's Stadium (Reuters photo)

seconds of the third quarter.

Mitchell was taken off the field on a stretcher, the second Lion in two games hurt seriously enough to halt play for 20 minutes with fears of paralysis. But Mitchell walked into the hospital where he was examined.

Detroit players wore a helmet decal bearing the number 39 in tribute to linebacker Reggie Brown, who suffered a career-ending head injury last week. Brown was hospitalised with paralysis fears but is now walking.

Lion kicker Jason Hanson followed Mitchell's departure with a 33-yard field goal and reserve quarterback Frank Reich marched the Lions for a fourth-quarter touchdown, but it was too little and too late for Detroit.

Diller completed a nine-yard touchdown pass to Horace Copeland, running along the back of the end zone, to put the Buccaneers ahead 10-0 with 10:40 remaining in the second quarter.

Tampa Bay's Michael Husted kicked two first-half field goals, a 22-yarder 9:36 into the game and a 42-yard effort with 6:49 remaining in the second quarter.

and our offensive line kicked butt."

Detroit quarterback Scott Mitchell, who was incomplete on a fourth-down touchdown attempt from the Tampa 7-yard line, suffered a concussion on a run in the final

Ferguson furious as United slump to shock 3-2 defeat

LONDON (AFP) — Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson blasted his players after their charge towards a fifth Premiership title in six years suffered a dramatic setback with a 3-2 defeat at struggling Coventry on Sunday.

United had looked on course for their seventh successive league win when they led 2-1 with only four minutes remaining thanks to goals from Ole Gunnar Solskjaer and Teddy Sheringham. But a Dion Dublin penalty and a stunning goal from Darren Huckerby condemned them to a shock defeat.

Ferguson said: "People might try to suggest we were complacent. I don't think that was the case but we were careless. We were silly and we got what we deserved because we invited Coventry to attack us and defended far too deep."

"The critics will say that this might give us a kick up the backside in terms of winning the league title but that's not something I will be thinking about until April — which is when we normally hit top form."

Elsewhere, Jurgen Klinsmann was given a hero's welcome when he made his second 'debut' for Tottenham, but he failed to get on the scoresheet in a tense 1-1 draw with north London rivals Arsenal.

Blackburn closed the gap on United to five points but failed to exploit the champion's defeat after being held to a 2-2 draw at home to Crystal Palace.

Steve McManaman scored two stunning goals to give Liverpool a 2-1 win over struggling Newcastle in a pulsating clash at St James' Park.

The England midfielder struck in the 31st and 42nd minutes to cancel out a fine near-post header from Steve Watson after 16 minutes as Liverpool made it four wins in a row.

McManaman's first goal was an exquisite 20-yard angled drive after fine build-up play from fellow forwards Michael Owen and Robbie Fowler. His

second was a superb volley from close range after being brilliantly set up by the ever-dangerous Owen.

But Liverpool were stretched to the limit in the second half as the Magpies, without a win in seven games, laid siege to the Reds' goal.

Blackburn, meanwhile, twice went ahead through Bruce Dyer and former Rovers star Paul Warhurst, but each time Blackburn levelled with their prolific strike-force of Kevin Gallacher and Chris Sutton taking their seasonal goalscoring tallies to 11 and 13 respectively.

Rovers trimmed United's lead at the top of the table to five points and held a two point advantage over Chelsea, who visit Southampton on Monday.

The return of German captain Klinsmann, meanwhile, failed to lift the gloom at Tottenham who slid into the bottom two after the 1-1 draw against bitter rivals Arsenal.

Klinsmann played a part in the first-half opener by

the side out."

West Ham won the other London derby beating 10-man Wimbledon 2-1 with an own goal from Alan Kimble and striker Paul Kinson, who had been felled in the second minute by Ben Thatcher — the latter was promptly sent off.

Wimbledon's new Norwegian signing Stale Solbakken grabbed a consolation goal on the final whistle.

Leicester ended a run of three successive defeats with a 1-1 draw at home to Sheffield Wednesday, who had Croatian Dejan Stefanovic sent off for a second bookable offence in the 43rd minute.

Leicester wing Steve Guppy scored his second goal of the season to give the League Cup holders the lead before Andy Booth

equalised in the second half.

Aston Villa made it four points from a possible six over the holiday break as they also drew 1-1, with Leeds United.

Barnsley still prop up the table despite a 1-0 home win over Derby County. Ashley Ward scoring the goal against his former club.

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Baup takes over Bordeaux

BORDEAUX (AFP) — Elie Baup will take over as coach of French first division club Bordeaux after Guy Stephan announced Monday that he plans to scale back his involvement. Baup, Stephan's assistant, will take over all responsibility for on-field affairs with immediate effect, the club announced. Stephan will continue in the role of general manager. Former Lyon coach Stephan, 41, took over Bordeaux at the start of the season, replacing Roland Courbis, while Baup managed St Etienne between 1994 and 1996.

Weah out for two months

MILAN (AFP) — AC Milan's former FIFA world player of the year George Weah is likely to be out of action for two months with a hernia injury. The former Paris Saint Germain striker, who has had to pull out of a club friendly in Israel, will be out for two months if he has to undergo an operation subject to a second opinion. Maurizio Ganz, recently transferred from city rivals Inter, looks likely to replace the Liberian alongside Dutch strike partner Patrick Kluivert.

Madar set to make Everton debut

LIVERPOOL (AFP) — French international forward Mickael Madar is expected to make his English Premiership debut for Everton in a relegation battle against Crystal Palace on January 10. Everton will complete the final formalities of bringing the Deportivo La Coruna player to Goodison Park early this week, manager Howard Kendall said Monday. Madar has signed a contract but has not been registered in time to play in the weekend FA Cup clash with Newcastle. The 29-year-old is all set to fly to join the Merseyside strugglers, but problems over acquiring an international clearance from the Spanish Football Association — which was closed over the holiday period — have held up the deal. "I would have liked to have played Madar against Bolton on Saturday, but it has been a little bit awkward with the holidays in Spain and over here in terms of trying to complete documentation and clearances," said Kendall.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF
& TAMARA HIRSCH

WHO NEEDS ACES?

Neither vulnerable. East deals.

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The bidding:
EAST SOUTH WEST NORTH
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Opening lead: Eight of a

In the 1930s and early 1940s, Philadelphia was graced by four ladies with great talent and flair for bridge. Outstanding among them, of course, was Helen Sobel, whom most commentators would place high on any list of the great players of all time. Not far behind were Olive Peterson, Peggy Solomon and Sally

Invitation for Pre-qualification of Consultants for Supervision of Construction of the Integrated Development Project of the Southern Ghors

The Government of Jordan has the final designs and tender documents prepared for the works listed below. It has also secured the finance for the construction and supervision of these works. The three Dams listed are to be constructed of Roller Compacted Concrete (RCC) with properties as described:-

- Wala Dam, 49m high, 300m long, 9.3 MCM storage capacity, with an estimated rolled crete volume 185,000m³.
- Mujib Dam, 62m high, 600m long, 35 MCM storage capacity, with an estimated rolled crete volume 750,000 m³.
- Tannur Dam, 69m high, 240m long, 16.8 MCM storage capacity, with an estimated rolled crete volume 260,000m³.

Diversion weir at Mujib, with a 1.3kms long tunnel, the southern conveyor 73.5km, northern conveyor 28km long, and irrigation infrastructure for 11,862 dunums.

The services will include site supervision and general contract administration during construction and maintenance period, including necessary reporting and preparation of project Manuals, with a prior phase to review the design and tender documents. It is anticipated that the services will be divided into four separate contracts:-

1. Supervision of construction for Wala and Tannur Dams
2. Supervision of construction for Mujib Dam
3. Supervision of construction for Mujib Weir and Conveyors
4. Supervision of construction for Irrigation Infrastructure

International Consultants with experience in the design and/or supervision of RCC dams are invited to submit pre-qualifications applications for the above contracts 1 and 2, and those with experience in similar works to apply for qualification for the other two contracts.

International consultants are required to joint venture with Jordanian consulting firms classified under class A or B in the fields of water supply, sewerage, roads, and electromechanical engineering. The International Consultants interested to participate in pre-qualification for the above projects are invited to collect the pre-qualification documents in accordance with the following terms.

1. Members of each joint venture are requested to provide with their pre-qualifications documents, a letter of intention duly signed by all members stating that the joint venture is committed to submit a duly legalised agreement, on award and before contract signature.
2. All given information must be correct and accurate.
3. The International Consultants shall comply with the Law of the Jordanian Engineering Association regarding registration.
4. The deadline for the collection of pre-qualification documents shall be at 13:00 Jordanian local time on January 10, 1998.
5. The Pre-qualification proposals shall be submitted to the Jordan Valley Authority (Address below) no later than 13:00 local time on February 7th 1998, and must include on the envelope "Subject" Pre-qualification of Consultants for Supervision of Construction of the Integrated Development Project of the Southern Ghors.

Address
Dr. Dureid Mahasneh
Secretary General
Jordan Valley Authority

Amman P.O. Box 2769 - Jordan
Fax: 962 - 6 - 689916
Tel: 962 - 6 - 689400

Turkey, Italy combine efforts to end Kurdish refugee influx

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey said Monday that it would cooperate with Italy to put an end to the influx of Kurdish immigrants arriving illegally in Italian ports.

"We are aware of the scale of the problem and are ready to cooperate fully with Italian authorities," Necati Utkan, spokesman for the Turkish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, told journalists.

His comments came shortly after Italian police announced Saturday that a fresh group of 835 Kurds or Iraqi Kurds had landed illegally on southern Italian shores from a grounded Turkish vessel, the Ararat.

This latest wave of arrivals prompted Germany's Social

Democrat Party (SPD) on Monday to urge Italy to "secure its frontiers."

SPD foreign affairs spokesman Karsten Voigt told the German press that Kurds who were allowed to stay in Italy after entering illegally "should not be allowed to disappear two weeks later only to turn up in Germany or the Netherlands."

Currently, Italian regulations give identified immigrants a grace period of two weeks to leave Italy, but the time is often employed by the illegals to disappear underground, subsequently resurfacing in other European countries.

Close to 3,000 illegal Kurdish immigrants have breached Italian coastlines since the start of 1997.

Debate on a law to tighten the process is to resume in the Italian parliament next month.

Mr. Utkan said the waves of immigration were the result of "organised crime," adding that "our approach to the problem is serious."

He urged all sides to "square up to their responsibilities so as to help improve the situation."

But Mr. Utkan said the waves of Kurdish refugees was a problem "not just limited to countries in the region — all the countries concerned should fulfil their obligations in this sphere, as much as Turkey."

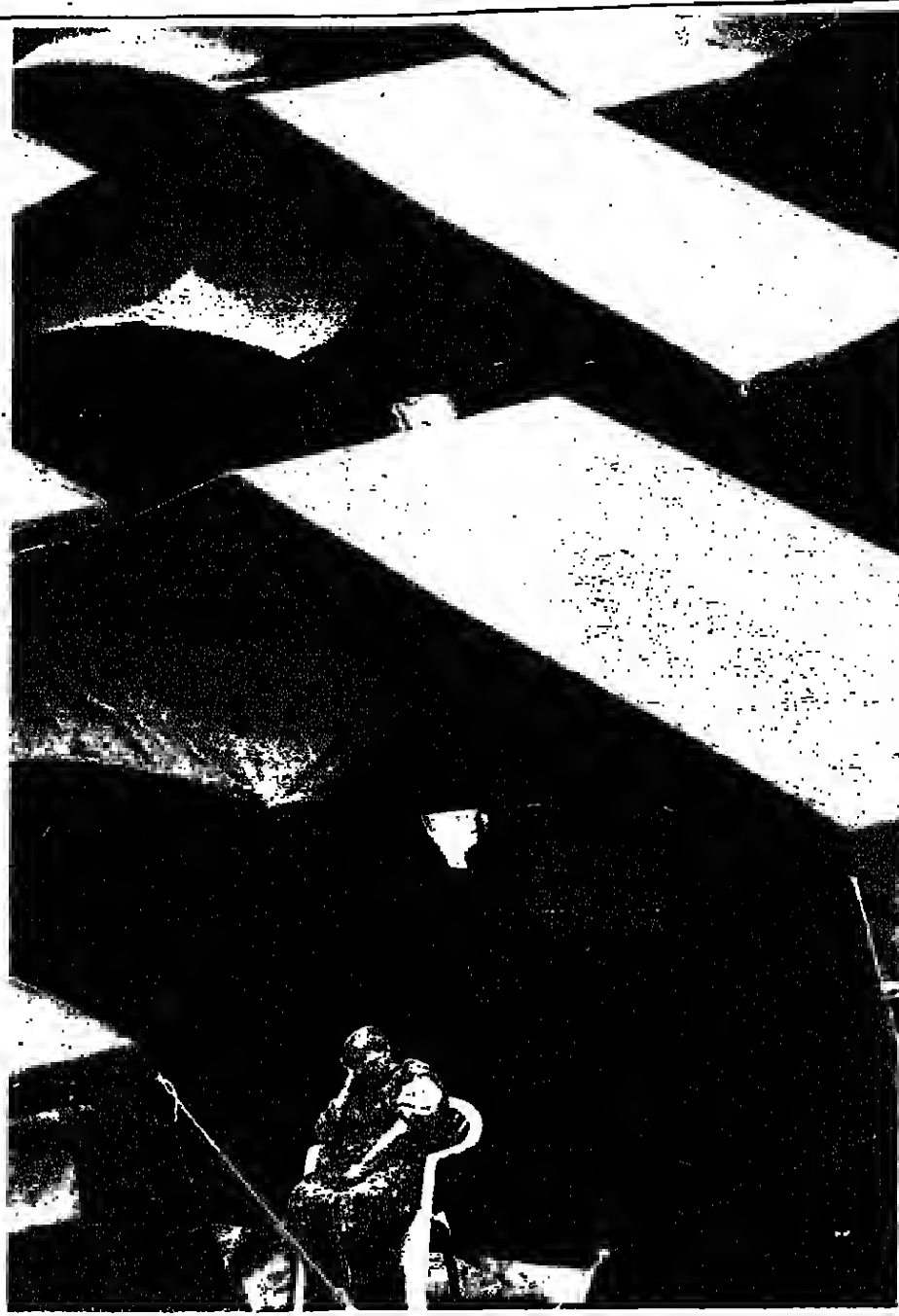
Giorgio Napolitano for Turkey to "work seriously" to stop illegal immigration of Kurds from Turkey into Europe.

The world should "recognise the rights of the Kurdish people," said Mr. Napolitano.

Separatists have been fighting to establish their own homeland in southern Turkey for more than 13 years with more than 27,000 people killed in the conflict.

Human rights groups say the death toll is much higher.

The group of 835 Kurdish refugees who arrived at the weekend are still being sheltered in four reception centres near the town of Catanzaro, in the southern region of Calabria.



BEST PHOTO: An elderly woman sits amidst tents in a homeless camp in Nocera Umbra, after the major earthquake which hit central Italy Sept. 26, 1997. This picture taken by AP photographer Luca Bruno on Monday Sept. 29, 1997, has been awarded 'Photo of the Year' at the 12th edition of the 1997 Chia Sardinia International Prize. It is sponsored by the Sardinian regional government and private companies (AP Photo)

Egyptian delegation tours Baghdad hospitals

BAGHDAD (AFP) — An Egyptian delegation including top film maker Youssef Shabeen, feminist Nawal Al Sadawi and the actress Raghda toured hospital paediatric wards here Monday as part of their mission of mercy to Iraq.

The 23-member delegation visited Al Mansur and Saddam hospitals in Baghdad where Iraqi children are undergoing treatment for various chronic ailments.

The delegation, which also included doctors, pharmacists and lawyers, brought \$30,000 in medicine to Iraq, a gift from businessmen and pharmacists.

Iraq has been under a U.N. embargo since it invaded neighbouring Kuwait in 1990.

Friday an Icelandic plane loaded with gifts and medicine collected by Icelandic and Italian humanitarian organisations landed in Iraq, following the arrival of a plane sent by Russian ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy containing five tonnes of medicine.

The United Nations allowed the Icelandic and Russian planes to fly to Iraq for humanitarian reasons.



Egyptian actress Raghda cradles a sick baby during a visit to the Saddam Hospital in Baghdad Monday. A group of Egyptians including several artists arrived in Baghdad Sunday to express solidarity with Iraqis suffering stringent U.N. sanctions. The delegation brought some 2.5 tonnes of medicine and gifts for Iraqi children (Reuters photo)

Israelis prefer not to be alone with Netanyahu

TEL AVIV (R) — Israelis elected Benjamin Netanyahu prime minister but would rather not be with him on an isolated island somewhere.

A Dabaf poll of 504 Israelis for the daily Yedioth Ahronoth published on Monday showed that 39 per cent would rather not be alone on an island with any politician.

For those who did not mind the company of a politician, Shimon Peres — the Nobel Peace laureate ousted by Mr. Netanyahu in 1996 — was the preferred choice.

The survey showed 20 per cent would rather be alone with Mr. Peres, 15 per cent with Ehud Barak, the former general who took his place as the Labour Party leader, and 14 per cent with Mr. Netanyahu.

The poll did not explain Mr. Netanyahu's poor showing but he has in the last year weathered a near-indictment for corruption, tensions with Washington and a revolt in his Likud Party.

Israeli diplomatic correspondents, citing the turnout of Mr. Netanyahu's 18 months in office, say the 48-year-old leader revels in always being at odds with somebody. Twelve per cent of those polled split their votes among an array of 27 other Israeli politicians.

Iran, Tajikistan sign defence accord

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran and Tajikistan signed here Monday a memorandum of understanding on defence cooperation, Iran's official news agency IRNA said.

The accord was signed between Iranian Defence Minister Admiral Ali Shamkhani and his Tajik counterpart Shirali Kheirulloev, who has been on a visit here since Saturday.

Mr. Shamkhani said the agreement was aimed at regional peace and stability. "It is our policy to boost cooperation in all areas of defence with Muslim countries," he said, without disclosing the content of the accord.

The Tajik official said experts would review ways of implementing the terms of the memorandum.

Mr. Shamkhani offered Sunday to provide logistical and technical training to Tajikistan's military personnel.

Mr. Kheirulloev is the first Tajik military official to visit here since his country's independence in 1991.

Iran and Russia played an instrumental role in bringing about a settlement in the conflict between the neo-communist Dushanbe government and Islamist rebels.

Clinton has sent no envoy to Iran, says White House

WASHINGTON (R) — U.S. President Bill Clinton has no plans to send a special envoy to Tehran, the White House said on Monday, dismissing a report that an envoy had been sent.

"We have no plans to send a special envoy to Tehran at all," Eric Rubin, a spokesman, said. He said a reported visit by Tom Lantos, a California Democrat, was "news to us."

The official news agency of the United Arab Emirates, in a Washington-dated dispatch, had quoted informed sources as saying President Clinton sent Mr. Lantos to look into possible changes in Iranian foreign policy.

Mr. Lantos' spokesman did not immediately return a phone call seeking comment on the congressman's whereabouts.

Mr. Rubin said the U.S. was looking for "deeds not words" to confirm any change in Iranian foreign policy since the surprise election in May of Mohammad Khatami, a relatively moderate cleric considered a reformer.

President Khatami stirred new speculation this month about a possible U.S.-Iran thaw when he proclaimed his respect for the "great people of the United States."

At a Dec. 14 news conference in Tehran, he voiced interest in restoring a dialogue poisoned since Islamists held 52 American hostages at the Tehran embassy for 444 days after the 1979 Islamist revolution.

Two days later, President Clinton responded at a news conference, saying "Do I hope there will be some conditions under which this dialogue can resume? I certainly do."

He said the government was assessing "how to proceed" with Iran, adding: "I have always said... that I thought it was tragic that the United States was separated from the people of Iran."

The U.S. position has been that it would consider a public and "authoritative" dialogue with Iran as long

as three issues were discussed: Iran's support for violent Islamist groups, its opposition to the U.S.-sponsored Middle East peace process and its alleged development of weapons of mass destruction.

The tone of the rhetoric from Washington has softened since President Khatami's election to a job in which he remains subordinate to Iran's supreme religious leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

U.S. officials say they have been monitoring whether the new president's relatively liberal views on domestic social policy extend to foreign relations, also at issue is whether any such moderate views can prevail in a system where hard-line clerics hold ultimate power. "We're hearing things come out of Iran that we haven't heard for 20 years," State Department spokesman James Foley said on Dec. 17. He cited in particular a softening of rhetoric on Iranian opposition to the Arab-Israeli peace process.

Trial of 1995 Algerian jail mutiny, massacre opens

ALGIERS (AFP) — The trial opened in the Algerian capital Sunday of 49 prisoners charged with participating in a bloody mutiny at an Algiers high-security jail in February 1995, which left at least 100 people dead.

Proceedings were immediately thrown into disarray however when counsel for the defence walked out when the court refused to hear testimony from certain defence witnesses.

Lawyers participating in the trial said they believe that the hearings may now be postponed.

The 49 accused, the majority of whom are Islamist activists still held in detention, are charged with wilful homicide, sequestration, attempted escape and destruction of state property.

Officials put the death toll from the February 1995 mutiny at Serkadji jail at 96 inmates and four warders.

The uprising ended when security forces stormed the

high-security prison, in a move which provoked threats of reprisals from the Islamic Salvation Army (AIS), the armed wing of the outlawed Islamic Salvation Front (FIS).

The AIS is one of the radical Islamist groups fighting the military-backed government in a war that has so far cost more than 80,000 lives since 1992, according to the human rights group Amnesty International.

The war started after the government cancelled the second round of 1992 elections the FIS was poised to win.

Two FIS leaders, Yekhef Cherati and Kacem Tadjouri, were among those killed in the security forces' assault.

The authorities claim that Cherati led the detained Islamist activists in the mutiny.

FIS officials accused the authorities of taking advantage of the mutiny to target activists detained in jail and of murdering some 200 prisoners. Among the lawyers representing the accused are

Belkacem Tahri, Bachir Mechri, Mustapha Bouchachi and Mahmoud Khellil, all of whom have previously represented leaders of the now banned FIS.

The lawyers walked out of Sunday's hearings after the court refused to admit as defence witnesses a leading figure in FIS, a former head of the Islamic Armed Group (GIA) chief who faces a death sentence, and Lembarek Boumarafi, who was sentenced to death for assassinating Algerian president Mohammed Boudiaf in 1992.

A governmental inquiry, which was never made fully public, concluded that "internal and external complicity" and "dysfunctional" prison management enabled the uprising to take place.

The Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights has publicly suggested that the mutiny was orchestrated by the security forces to allow security forces to eliminate Islamist detainees.

Stowaways find themselves in wrong country

CAIRO (AFP) — Three Romanian stowaways jumped dancing, from a ship's container opened by Egyptian dockers because they thought they had reached Canada. Dockers at Damietta port opened the container from Italy after hearing calls from men inside. The three Romanians came out doing a victory dance thinking they had made it to Canada where they had relatives. The stowaways told police they wanted to celebrate New Year with their relatives and had crossed into Italy illegally where an Albanian docker put them into a container supposedly bound for Canada.

El Al offers 'flight to nowhere'

TEL AVIV (AP) — Here's a novel idea for Israelis growing claustrophobic in their country but uninterested in other ones: get on an airplane, fly around, go home. The people at El Al think they may have a hit in the "flight to nowhere." The maiden voyage proved "you don't necessarily have to go to London or Paris to have a good time," company spokesman Nachman Kleiman said. Saturday's flight took 300 tour agency and airline representatives from Ben-Gurion airport in the skies over Rhodes and back. They were treated to dinner, ice cream, jelly donuts and popcorn as they sang Hanukkah songs and watched films.

Day-Lewis plays an Irishman... again

NEW YORK (AP) — Oscar winner Daniel Day-Lewis isn't an Irishman, he just plays one on screen — again and again and again. Day-Lewis, who starred as Irish characters in "My Left Foot" and "In the Name of the Father," plays a former IRA soldier seeking peace in his new film "The Boxer." "I am English and I was raised in England, but I'm very proud of whatever part of me is Irish," Day-Lewis told the New York Post. "People who are Anglo-Irish and English people living in Ireland... have become acutely aware of the role the British have played and want to do something to redress the balance."

'Regular guy' leaves \$32 m to charity

MARION (AP) — George Alber wore khaki work pants, washed his clothes at the laundromat, and spent his mornings yacking with a friend at a local cafe over a \$3 plate of bacon and eggs — which the two would split. Just a regular guy. Except for one thing: He was a multimillionaire. Alber's fortune was never a topic of conversation until last month, when he died at the age of 92 and left \$32 million to 10 local charities. "He was frugal with himself. With everyone else, he was generous," said Barbara Rice, his longtime bookkeeper and friend.

German ecologists elect Waigel 'dinosaur of year'

BONN (AFP) — A German association of ecologists has elected Finance Minister Theo Waigel "dinosaur of the year" for having decided to sell parts of some nature parks. The association for the protection of nature (NABU) awarded Waigel "the worst prize for the environment" and said that he had become "the biggest threat" to the parks. The "dinosaur of the year" trophy, in the form of a dinosaur, is made of tin and weighs 2.6 kg.

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